

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and present a petition on behalf of people from Fenwood, Melville, Saskatoon, Duff, Grayson, and I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to establish a special task force to aid the government in its fight against the escalating problem of youth crime in Saskatchewan, in light of the most recent wave of property crime charges, including car thefts, as well as crimes of violence, including the charge of attempted murder of a police officer; such task force to be comprised of representatives of the RCMP, municipal police forces, community leaders, representatives of the Justice department, youth outreach organizations, and other organizations committed to the fight against youth crime.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — The following petitions were presented for private Bills and are hereby laid on the Table. By Ms. Hamilton:

Of the Lutheran Church-Canada, Central District, in the province of Saskatchewan.

And by Mr. Wall:

Of The Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company, the Montreal Trust company of Canada, and the Montreal Trust company in the province of Saskatchewan.

And by Ms. Murrell:

For the TD Trust Company and the Central Guaranty Trust Company.

According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to cause the construction of a new hospital in La Loche;

And of citizens petitioning the Assembly to change the big game damage compensation program to provide reasonable compensation.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next move first reading of a

Bill, the Crown corporations accountability Act.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next move first reading of a Bill, an Act respecting the property rights of the people of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next move first reading of a Bill entitled, the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council amendment Act, 1997, sessional dates.

And if I may, while I'm on my feet, I'll read notice of two more companion Bills.

I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next move first reading of a Bill entitled, the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council amendment Act, 1997, duration of Assembly.

And I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next move first reading of a Bill entitled, the Legislative Assembly public presentations Act.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, my nephew John Scott, from Indian Head, in your gallery who is an emergency medical technician at Indian Head, and he's accompanied by former schoolmate, Scott Miller, from Indian Head, who is working in Regina. And I'd ask all members to join in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my real pleasure to introduce to you a guest who is visiting with us, here in the west gallery, from the province of Quebec. His name is Stephen Moran.

Stephen Moran was here attending the very exciting New Democratic Party national convention which took place here on the weekend.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — And he has come to join us to observe how the Saskatchewan legislature does its business.

I also, Mr. Speaker, would like to draw to the attention of the House — and I know the members opposite would be particularly interested — Stephen Moran is also the candidate for the New Democratic Party in the Montreal constituency of Ahuntsic in the province of Quebec.

And I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming Stephen to the House here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

National Volunteer Week

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday marked the beginning of a very special week across Canada — National Volunteer Week. Today has been designated as Volunteer Spirit Day in which all volunteers are encouraged to demonstrate their spirit of voluntarism. Those of us who live in Saskatchewan witness the spirit and drive of our volunteer traditions every day. Our province is well-known for its community spirit.

Mr. Speaker, much of that community spirit comes from the thousands of volunteers who give their time, energy, and most importantly, I think, their enthusiasm to events and causes that matter to them. Without volunteers many community events might not even take place.

Mr. Speaker, everyone values their time, but everyone also values their community. And that's why we volunteer — so that others can benefit. But by volunteering, we benefit too. Volunteers build strong communities. Saskatchewan has a strong tradition of volunteering and it would be very appropriate if all of us in this Assembly volunteered some time to a worthy cause this week. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a follow-up comment to the issue I raised the other day about the community of Grenfell hosting the Keystone Cup. Yesterday the Grenfell Play-It-Again Storm certainly showed Saskatchewan residents and individuals across western Canada what they're made of. They indeed took home the award — won the award for their local community. And I want to congratulate them on that.

I also want to make recognition of a couple of volunteer groups, and acknowledgement of Volunteer Week. Mr. Speaker, the . . . (inaudible) . . . as well down at Estevan, the South-east Volunteer Recognition Awards ceremony was held. And Mr. John Mansuy was given the Coach of the Year Award from Kipling, and also the Kennedy-Langbank's senior girls soccer team was awarded the Team of the Year Award. I want to extend my congratulations to these individuals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Passing of Gail Kozun and Fred Heal

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan lost two exceptionally talented, contributing citizens in the recent passing of Gail Kozun and Fred Heal.

Gail Roach Kozun, executive director of Egadz downtown youth centre in Saskatoon, died last week at the age of 49. Gail was born in Swift Current, and I can attest to what a great cheerleader she was in high school. She's been called tremendous, committed, and passionate. Gail saw something that had to be done to improve her community and she did it. She made certain the street outreach program got started. She made certain the funding for that program continued. She made certain a teen parenting program, a walk-in clinic, and a literacy

program all got their start at the centre. And the list of boards of directors Gail served seemed endless, from Social Services appeal boards, Child Find, and the Children's Health Foundation, and many, many others.

I know I speak for all members of this Assembly in thanking her family for sharing her with us. And our hearts go out to Gail's husband Al, daughter Amanda, and son Paul.

And Fred Heal, as all of us know was former executive director of Meewasin Valley Authority, passed away also last week in Saskatoon. He was born in your town, Mr. Speaker, Moose Jaw. His post-graduate work was in biology and environmental studies and he took that forward in a visionary way to complete some fabulous work in our province. His legacy is going to live on in the wonderful Wanuskewin Park.

And to his children, Sherry of Calgary, Christie and Patrick of Saskatoon, and his long companion, Lynne Salisbury of Saskatoon, I want us all to extend our deepest sympathies.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Student Safety Training Program Receives Grant

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have heard many times that today's youth are our most important commodity. They will be the business people, the leaders, and the workers of tomorrow. Providing our young people with access to affordable education and skills training is an important part of this government's commitment to our youth.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday I had the privilege to demonstrate this government's dedication to young people of this province — despite the federal cut-backs — when I presented an \$8,000 grant to the early safety training, student support program. This program is administrated by the Energy Training Institute and Southeast Regional College for the training of youth between the ages of 16 and 21 who are seeking new or summer employment in a variety of local industries.

It was local industry who initiated the fund in 1996, Mr. Speaker, and it is the Department of Labour that provided the funds with this economic boost. This safety program will enable students to enrol in classes designed to teach them safety skills that are highly valued and recognized by most industries.

Having successfully completed such a program, the student will have an advantage in obtaining employment in a particular industry. Students will benefit with increased knowledge and skills, and industry will benefit because they will have trained, safety-conscious employees.

This is an excellent example of how a partnership between government and the private sector can benefit people as well as industry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Volunteer Week

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley has already

indicated, it is National Volunteer Week, and what better province to recognize this than within Saskatchewan.

We have a long and proud history of voluntarism, dating all the way back to the days when this province was first settled, with neighbours helping neighbours for everything from building barns to planting fields.

Times have changed but, as we move towards a new millennium, the volunteer spirit continues to thrive and prosper in Saskatchewan. From tiny communities to larger centres, residents are committed to devoting the time and effort to support these communities. The work is long and hard and sometimes we forget just how important these volunteers are to the lifeblood of any community. Without these volunteers, communities, and the province on the whole, would suffer greatly because volunteer spirit propels many communities forward.

Volunteers raise money for much needed hospital equipment, sports centres, playground equipment, and other community needs. The volunteer spirit in Saskatchewan shines through in many larger events, such as Telemiracle, the Big Valley Jamboree, the Grey Cup, and the Scott Tournament of Hearts. No matter what the event, this province can count on its residents to come through and volunteer their time and talents to make every project a success.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I ask all members to join with me in recognizing and congratulating all the tireless volunteers which make this province great. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Democratic Party Convention 1997

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the Regina tourism industry played host to a very successful New Democratic Party national convention. Now, Mr. Speaker, the event was made a success in part by the high-quality service that was provided by Regina's hospitality industry, and on behalf of all who attended, I say to those people in the industry, our sincere thank you.

I would also like to thank the New Democratic Party organizers for choosing Regina as the location to hold the convention, but I would also like to congratulate the service industry for their performance. They demonstrated through their efforts that organizers made the right decision when Regina was designated as the location for this important convention.

I was also personally very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that at this convention, Mr. Speaker, there was clearly presented an alternative to the Liberal "red book" which has been recycled in the Tory blue box.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — So in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that our tourism industry benefited from this convention. But more importantly, the Canadian people

benefited from this convention.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motorist Offers Help During Snowstorm

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, spring has been a long time coming. However, the cold winter has not dampened the goodness of the people of the Humboldt constituency. A Saskatoon woman hit the ditch during the spring snowstorm on April 1, and a Humboldt woman went beyond the call of duty to help her.

Christine Grimard of Saskatoon was driving home on Highway No. 5, a very narrow highway, when she ended up in the ditch. A few minutes later, Ann Berg of Humboldt stopped to see if she could help and ended up calling a tow truck. Despite assurances from Grimard that she would be safe, Berg stayed until the tow truck arrived and Grimard was safely on the road again.

Ann Berg has a very busy schedule, yet she took the time to make sure that a complete stranger was safely on her way. This only goes to reinforce what I have always known about the exemplary goodness and volunteer spirit of the people of the Humboldt constituency. They do care. Thank you, Ann Berg.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Entrepreneurial Development Centre Opens

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people are continually finding new ways of demonstrating that partnership and cooperation works. Our partnership for economic renewal and growth have given our province the lowest unemployment rate in the country.

Saskatchewan has also been a leader in reforming the ways governments deliver services to people, making public services more integrated, more accessible, and more efficient.

Last Friday, Mr. Speaker, the new Southwest Centre for Entrepreneurial Development opened in Swift Current. This centre brings together various economic development partners in the community of Swift Current and the south-west, including the Southwest Regional Economic Development Authority.

As members of this House are aware, regional economic development authorities are a key element in Saskatchewan's strategy for economic growth. Business people in the south-west can come to the centre for help in creating a business plan or marketing strategy or to access financing or educational opportunities.

The centre will also make it easier for new businesses to get started. Entrepreneurs can rent office space or receive business development counselling. Best of all, the centre is working in partnership with schools in the region to help create awareness among students about entrepreneurship.

Saskatchewan people have learned the value of partnership and

cooperation over the years — partnership that will teach young people about the virtues of entrepreneurship; a partnership that will provide an incubator for new small businesses in the south-west; a partnership for economic renewal and growth.

Mr. Speaker, that's the Saskatchewan way, and it works.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Auto Insurance Rates

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on March 12 in this House I questioned the minister in charge of SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) about reports the people of Saskatchewan could be facing an increase in their auto insurance rates. The minister indicated that Saskatchewan drivers would know in one month's time if they could expect higher car insurance rates or higher deductibles.

One month has passed since the minister made that comment. Will he tell this House what decision has been made with respect to the SGI rate increase?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Kelvington in the report that she is reading from, in my discussion with the media they'd asked me what was happening with insurance rates across the province. And I of course described for them the kinds of issues that had been confronting the auto fund over the last two years.

I also said in that interview, Mr. Speaker, that within a month's time I would have some detail from my officials — not that I would be making a statement anywhere to the Saskatchewan people or to this House, but in fact would have some information from my officials. To date, I don't have that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I think the people of this province could expect . . . should expect an answer from this minister as soon as he gets his information. We know that this government's profits has amounted to \$123 million since 1991 on SGI. The people of Saskatchewan deserve to know why, when the Crown is receiving record profits, why a rate increase is even being considered.

Will the minister make a commitment in this House today that the residents of Saskatchewan will not face a rate increase this year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that, first of all, the member should have been consulting with some of the members, her members, who sit at the Crown Corporations review because in the Crown Corporations review, a number of her members had asked me about the status of the auto fund.

And I clearly indicated to the members opposite what was happening with our auto fund. And that is, it was experiencing a great deal of pressure over the last couple of years. And the reason why it was experiencing that kind of pressure is that we've had two consecutive winters in this province where we've had major, major accidents and high costs. I've also indicated to the member that there were a variety of other options that we would be giving consideration to; that we've yet not had the answer to what those considerations would be.

Now if the member had have been paying attention at Crown Corporations, Mr. Speaker, this question was answered for her there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Jaws of Life Operational Costs

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition has received a number of calls from fire departments and emergency response teams from all throughout Saskatchewan. These groups have raised concerns about the fact that there is a cost each and every time the Jaws of Life team responds to the scene of an accident. SGI pays these charges only when the Jaws of Life is actually used, but does not pay when the apparatus is not used. Mr. Speaker, when SGI does not assume financial responsibility, it is left in the hands of municipal governments or other local bodies to absorb the costs — something they cannot afford.

Will the minister in charge of SGI explain what he plans on doing to address these concerns.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a very significant appreciation for what the member from Canora talks about, because recently at the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention, of which I was at and I believe the member from Canora was also at, I indicated to one of the members, I believe it was from Hafford, Saskatchewan, who experienced exactly some of the same issues . . . as does I believe the volunteer fire department out of Canora or one of the smaller communities that the member represents.

The issue, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that often when the Jaws of Life are being called out, when they arrive at the scene of an accident or at the scene of where they've been requested to attend, they aren't being used. And as a result of that they arrive at the location and there's cost associated with having made that trip.

What I've asked my officials from SGI, along with the senior representative of SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM to look at is, who should it be that actually makes the request to have the Jaws of Life come out, who will manage it and monitor that issue.

That discussion, Mr. Speaker, has already occurred. There'll be another discussion of that type within the next month, between

the SARM, SUMA and my members, officials from SGI.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister. We understand very well and so do all of the response teams, that when a call occurs, especially from the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), there is no decision that is to be made whether or not they go. They must attend. And when they arrive, they will not necessarily know exactly what their duties may be. It may be to use the Jaws of Life and provide that emergency rescue.

The problem that we're facing, Mr. Minister, is that we need a commitment, we need a commitment that SGI will fully fund the costs that a team experiences. It doesn't matter whether that emergency equipment is used, there is a cost. And we have to have a clear definition from your department, not who is going to make the call — whether or not your department will fund those costs. Simple question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I've already indicated to the member that on all occasions that the Jaws of Life go out, there isn't a payment on behalf of SGI because there are many occasions where in fact the Jaws of Life, first of all, has been described by some of the first responders who make the request, weren't required. And secondly, when they do go out, the question is, who is it that authorized the call?

Those are the two questions that haven't been discussed and haven't been decided yet, Mr. Speaker, and that's the reason why SUMA and SARM and SGI are having discussions around who it is who should authorize the call. In fact who should be paying it is part of the other question that they're being resolved — whether it should be SGI who should be paying that or whether municipalities of some sort should be paying that. That's the discussion, Mr. Speaker, that are currently being undertaken right now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Auto Lease Insurance Surcharges

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, the number of Saskatchewan residents who lease vehicles is increasing at a phenomenal rate. In 1995, there were 22,000 leased vehicles in this province. By 1996, this figure had increased to 28,000 — a 30 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, this government places a 20 per cent surcharge on insuring leased automobiles in Saskatchewan which would obviously bring in this government millions of dollars in revenue. This tax — and that's what we see it as — does not exist in B.C. (British Columbia), Alberta, Manitoba. And I guess what we're asking is if the minister in charge would kindly explain to the people of Saskatchewan why this tax exists in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly it's a real privilege today having SGI day — haven't had one of those for awhile.

Well I want to advise the members opposite that the 20 per cent surcharge has been around for a long time. It isn't something that this administration has initiated. It's been there for some time. And as the member opposite indicates, that it's time for us to take a look at whether or not the 20 per cent surcharge still actually applies in the way in which it did in the past.

And part of that review that we're doing, which the member from Kelvington talks about, we have included in there the requirement, the necessity, whether or not we're going to see the 20 per cent surcharge continue to have a life, or whether it's going to have . . . or we'll use a different process in terms of managing that. And we're currently doing that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear how SGI may be forced to pass on higher insurance rates because of its financial situation. We continue to hear the minister cry poor. Yet the Liberal opposition continues to demonstrate that SGI has recorded a string of profits. And SGI places taxes on insurance for leased vehicles, unlike other western provinces, and collects millions of dollars as a result of this tax.

Will the minister of SGI make a commitment in this House to eliminate this hidden tax, a tax that might have been imposed by the Sheriff of Rottingham? Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, in my previous response to the member from Kelvington, I mentioned to her that they have people who sit on the Crown Corporations who have asked me these very same questions. And the truth of the matter is that the member from Melville happens to be one of the members who sits on the Crown Corporations and he asked me this very same question.

And I say to the member from Melville that there is the auto fund and there's SGI CANADA. And SGI CANADA — he's correct — SGI CANADA has shown a surplus this year . . . will show a surplus this year. But the auto fund, Mr. Speaker, is in some difficulty, and I explained that slowly to the member from Melville at the Crown Corporations — slowly.

And the issue today, Mr. Speaker, is in the review of the auto fund rates in the province, we will be taking into consideration the 20 per cent surcharge — we will be taking that into account. But the member has to have an appreciation and understands that the auto fund in this province is in some difficulty. And we're going to review all of the options that are available to us to ensure that Saskatchewan continues to have the best auto funds anywhere in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Corporation Billing Systems

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, we have heard several ministers in charge of Crown corporations indicate in this House how financially conscious and responsible our Crown corporations are. Some might say that these suggestions aren't worth 2 cents, and I'm inclined to agree.

Mr. Speaker, our office recently received a copy of a bill issued by SaskEnergy to a Saskatchewan resident. The amount owing is 2 cents. Obviously the cost of mailing such a bill is far more than the bill itself, so one has to question the logic of this practice. I would like to send a copy of the bill over to the minister in charge of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan).

Mr. Speaker, when you throw in the fact that thousands of Saskatchewan residents are billed on a monthly basis by our family of Crown corporations, one also has to question how much money our Crowns spend in a total to collect such small bills.

Will the minister in charge of Crown Investments Corporation explain the sense in paying postage to bill a customer for 2 cents. And what does he intend to do to address this obvious waste of taxpayers' dollars?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me say the knowledge of the member with respect to the billing system in the Crowns is worth about 2 cents. The computer systems that are put in place serve hundreds of thousands of customers and are done on a computer. They aren't individually scrutinized by staff within the corporation; it's done through an automated system; the bills are put out monthly.

I want to remind the member opposite that it was this government that took the initiative to put together the SaskEnergy and the SaskPower bill that was separated and we saved tens of thousands of dollars in doing that.

If the member opposite is so concerned about the 2-cent bill, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, if that is the biggest concern that he's got with respect to the Crown Investments Corporation allowing and tabling all of the documents today, and a 2-cent bill is what's foremost on that member's mind, Mr. Speaker, it really does describe and display the incompetence of the research staff — Mr. Melenchuk one of them — hired by that caucus.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gun Control Legislation

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's quite a convention the NDP (New Democratic Party) had over the weekend. By the time it was over, they were already conceding defeat.

But apparently the NDP think they're going to send the Liberals a message, Mr. Speaker. And what is that message? The NDP leader wants even stricter gun control. That means making sure people who use guns pay a stiffer penalty, the NDP leader said.

Obviously the NDP leader thinks it's some sort of a crime just to own a gun, even if it's used for hunting or trapping or the protection of livestock. She says people should pay a penalty just for using a gun.

To the Justice minister: how can you have any credibility in fighting the Liberal firearm legislation when your own federal leader is going to be fighting for even more attacks on gun owners in the upcoming federal election?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I think I can take from the question that's received from the hon. member that he's extremely upset about how successful this convention was.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — And I think it's even more telling that one of their red Tories joined our party with much fanfare.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, our position on gun control has not changed. We are involved in the reference to the Supreme Court of Canada. We have opted out of the registration. The federal party has taken a position which is supportive of a review of this Bill C-68 legislation, because we all know that it doesn't recognize the regional differences of Canada and the perspective that we all have brought together from this party. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can only hope that the NDP Party has more conventions like this weekend that end in defeat. As for the Tory, one can only say that he lost his head.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, I suppose sometimes you can say you simply have a difference of opinion with your federal party. However, that's going to be a little tough for you to sell that when one of your own MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly), the former deputy premier, is the federal campaign chairman and the party president.

So you'd think he would have . . . Mr. Minister, you'd think he'd have some say in what the NDP's firearm policy is. Yet the NDP leader thinks people should be penalized simply for owning guns. No wonder, no wonder she's already conceding defeat.

Mr. Minister, what steps are you taking to formally let the NDP leader and the new party president know that their position on gun control is an insult to every law-abiding firearm owner in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it appears that this convention may smart for that member for a long time.

But what I would say about the gun control issue is that our position is the same. The federal NDP position is supportive of our position; they are saying that this legislation needs to be reviewed.

And all of us in this House support the provisions of the legislation that relate to the import of illegal firearms into Canada. We also support the provisions that relate to the use of firearms in various crimes. But what we do not support is the registration system, which has been totally fouled up by the federal Liberals, and we are going to be consistent in that position.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Patient Confidentiality

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, the Moose Mountain Health District appears to be violating the important principle of patient confidentiality.

Without the knowledge or consent of any of the doctors in the district, health district staff began photocopying out-patient records and forwarding them to the district office. And it was only by chance that the doctors found out. They immediately voiced their concerns as they see this as a serious breach of patient confidentiality.

Mr. Minister, medical records are supposed to remain confidential. What right do health boards have to collect out-patient records from patient files without the knowledge of either the patients or their doctors? Mr. Minister, is this something the health district is doing on its own, or have they been ordered to compile these records by your department?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, each and every health district will fulfil its responsibilities to the best of its ability, as this health district is doing, Mr. Speaker.

I believe the member is referring to the article that we've all seen in today's press. I believe that's where he's getting his information from, Mr. Speaker. And if he reads the article he will note, he will note that all parties in this dispute, the district board and the medical doctors in that community, are agreed that the problem here is a communication issue. A communication issue. It's here, Mr. Speaker, in today's press.

So I would encourage that district and those medical doctors to continue to talk, continue to work together, and find resolution to their concern.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Health's designate, the doctors in the Moose Mountain Health District see this as a serious problem. In fact they see it as a breach of client confidentiality.

And, Mr. Minister, I did meet with staff this morning — Dr. Botha of the head of district's medical association. No one had told him the reason . . . or has told him today the reasons these records are being collected. No one has given him any reason to believe that patient confidentiality is being protected.

Mr. Minister, this is a serious breach of patient confidentiality. And for all we know, it may be going on in other districts as

well.

Mr. Minister, will you immediately inform health district offices that they have no right to demand these records without the consent of patients or their physicians?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the member may have talked to one or more of the doctors from the community. I wonder if this afternoon he'll be meeting with the district health board or some of their officials to . . .

An Hon. Member: — That's your job.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — No. No, Mr. Leader of the Third Party, that is your job. As a responsible member of this legislature, I suggest it would be appropriate if you speak to the people in the district health board who will be more, I'm sure, than happy to speak to you this afternoon.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is indicated again, it is indicated in today's press that the doctors involved here have been invited to district health board meetings. And it is indicated also that these doctors have turned that invitation down, for that opportunity to communicate.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the solution here is with communication, and I encourage the doctors and that district board to speak to one another.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a simple question to the minister: do you agree that this is a breach of confidentiality?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I agree that that member is making that accusation in this House without having talked to the district health board. I expect, Mr. Speaker, that all members would try and find out all of the information before coming into the House with this kind of accusation.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's clearly indicated by both sides of this dispute that it is a communication issue. The solution is not to be found on the floor of the legislature. The solution is to be found in communication between those medical doctors and that district board.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Casino Promotion

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last time I checked, Casino Regina was neither a campground nor did it offer accommodations, but that is exactly what is inferred by featuring the casino on the cover of the "1997 Saskatchewan Accommodation and Campground Guide." This is outrageous, Mr. Speaker. This guide is offered at tourism locations across the province.

And this year instead of promoting the great outdoors available in Saskatchewan and our many accommodations, we are subject to a promotion for the casino — as far away from nature as you could possibly get. Even the catch phrase on the front of this

guide is misleading, Mr. Speaker. It says "Saskatchewan, Naturally". Again, Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked there was nothing natural about a casino.

Is this is the image this government wants to present to the visitors of this province, and is the casino and gambling our biggest attraction?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that the casino is finally getting the recognition it deserves as one of the tourism attractions in the province. Tourism Saskatchewan did an independent study of the casino. They decided that the 1,100 jobs, all the spin-off to the hotels, the restaurants, the downtown businesses, the 29.1 million to the GDP (gross domestic product) . . . I think all of the businesses agree that people on their holidays like to do a variety of things, and certainly one of the things that people travelling — not just to Saskatchewan but to many destinations in Canada and the United States — have illustrated, that this is one of the things they like to do. So I am pleased that they recognized our contribution to that.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the tourism authorities out in the province were appalled that we have the casino on the front of the accommodation and campground guide. What has that got to do with accommodation and campgrounds?

Last year the minister stood in front of the Assembly and congratulated himself for paving the way for the three tourism groups in the province to combine. The Tourism Board representing the areas weren't even consulted on the decision on what to feature on the front page of this guide.

Mr. Minister, who made the decision to feature the casino on the front cover? And as well, did the casino pay for the privilege, or is it another case of free advertising?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can just assure you that it wasn't myself or anybody else on this side of the House that made that specific decision. We do have a partnership of tourism organizations that make decisions on these kinds of things, and I presume you could ask them that question. But it certainly wasn't ourselves.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I've tried to get an answer . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now hon. members will recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena is not located that far away and already I'm having difficulty hearing. And I'll ask all hon. members to allow the question to be put.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've tried twice to get an answer today and I haven't succeeded, so I'm going to try a third time.

Last year in the House I called on the Minister of Health to support a private members' Bill to raise the awareness of fetal

alcohol syndrome. Among other things, this Bill would've required all liquor outlets and licensed premises in the province to post signs warning that drinking could be harmful to the health of an unborn child.

The minister indicated that my proposal was too simplistic and later issued a press release indicating that his government would be leading the charge with an FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome) prevention plan.

Mr. Speaker, with great concern, I would like to bring to the attention of the House the fact that even with this announcement there has still been nothing tangible happening.

Will the minister explain why this more comprehensive solution to this problem is taking so long in happening? What has happened to the \$50,000 we budgeted for last year, and what's he going to do with the \$120,000 he's got budgeted for this year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that the member from Kelvington has understated the kinds of work that's been done in terms of this particular issue, when clearly the Minister of Health took under advisement, as well as been implemented in this province, Mr. Speaker, some of the issues that the member from Kelvington talked about, in partnership with the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority.

In consultation with the industry across the province, a decision was made, with the social policy on health, that we would not implement the decision about putting in the fetal alcohol signs into all of the hotels across the province. But what we did indicate that we would do with the fetal alcohol syndrome is that on all of the packages, on all of the bags in the province, Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming would put that insignia on it, making sure that people who would in fact use those facilities or purchase liquor from our stores would have that in front of them first and foremost. That decision was made.

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, is there's additional money that's gone into looking at the kinds of social impacts that alcohol has on fetal alcohol syndrome through the committee that the member is speaking about. That report will find its way further into this Assembly and into the Department of Health in the next little while.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 48—The Highways and Transportation Consequential Amendment Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 portant modification corrélative à la loi intitulée The Highways and Transportation Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 48, The Highways and Transportation Consequential Amendment Act, 1997, be now introduced and read for the first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be

read a second time at the next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 21—The Condominium Property Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Condominium Property Amendment Act, 1997. The Condominium Property Act, 1993, governs the formation and administration of condominiums. The Act establishes the rights and responsibilities of developers, owners, and boards. The legislation attempts to balance different and sometimes competing interests.

Significant changes were made to the legislation in 1993; these changes have now been in force for over two years. We have had an opportunity to monitor the results of the changes. During that time, we have received comments and suggestions from the groups affected as to how the legislation can be improved. The amendments being proposed by the government at this time respond to those comments and suggestions.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will enhance the consumer protection features of the legislation. For example, the existing Act requires a developer to disclose certain information to prospective buyers. The amendments I am introducing today state that this disclosure package must include information about any financing the developer has obtained to ensure the completion of the project.

Information must also be provided about how the developer proposes to allot extra parking spaces. Another amendment will clarify when the first annual meeting must be held.

There are also amendments to give the developer more flexibility when developing and selling condominium units. For example, the developer will no longer be required to provide the specified disclosure information after the condominium board, made up of owners, is administering the affairs of the condominium corporation.

A new provision will allow the establishment of a condominium register. This will be similar to the business corporations register. At present, there is no central place for information to be registered respecting condominium corporations. Condominium plans are registered at Land Titles Office, but if someone wants to contract with the condominium corporation, it can be difficult to determine who is a member of the board of directors. The government has received several requests to establish a condominium register. The requirements and procedures associated with such a registry would be established by regulations.

This Bill will also permit regulations to be made with respect to agricultural units. This change recognizes that the large grain terminals being built and operated in this province are being registered and sold as condominiums. Rather than have these condominiums comply in every respect with the existing

condominium legislation, which is primarily designed for residential condominiums, these regulations will replace or modify certain provisions in the Act.

The majority of amendments I am introducing today will clarify existing provisions, fill gaps in the legislation, and generally facilitate the administration of the Act. For example, the insurance provisions have been amended to specifically refer to bare land condominiums.

We are also adding flexibility to the procedures for reapportioning property taxes among owners in a condominium complex. The 1993 Act introduced flexibility by allowing a significant majority of owners to apply to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board for a reapportionment of taxes. This procedure was well received and has been used by a number of condominium corporations. We have been asked to consider additional changes to facilitate this process for condominium owners. The regulations will provide this flexibility.

The previous Act required the owners in a condominium complex to unanimously agree to a number of administrative decisions including, for example, accepting or granting easements relating to the condominium common property. We were told that unanimous agreement is virtually impossible to obtain. Thus for several purposes, two-thirds of the owners will be able to approve a change.

The previous Act allowed the condominium corporation to collect rent from a tenant where a unit owner has defaulted in paying his or her condominium fees. However, the Act did not provide a procedure for this purpose. Today's amendments will specify that a written notice must be provided to the tenant in these circumstances.

The problems addressed by these amendments were identified by condominium owners, board members, developers, lawyers, and others using this statute. The solutions to these problems were also developed by these same interested parties.

Government played a role in facilitating the process for determining which areas needed amendment. We also assisted with the wording of the proposed amendments. However to an significant extent, the Act reflects the cooperation and assistance received from persons representing the different sectors that have an interest in condominiums.

There were extensive consultations with representatives of the Saskatchewan Home Builders' Association, the mortgage lenders' association, the Insurance Brokers' Association of Saskatchewan, and condominium experts representing the interests of condominium buyers, owners, and managers. This Bill only includes amendments for areas where significant consensus was achieved.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Condominium Property Act, 1997.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to respond to Bill No. 21, The Condominium

Property Act.

While this Bill contains many amendments that are necessary in order to update the structure of the condominium development and management, there are also proposed changes that will bring the survey requirements in line with today's survey practices and will require developers to submit more and specific information about their plans to condominium corporations.

Another amendment included in this Bill will hopefully allow municipal governments to reduce some of their administrative costs. By repealing the current section of the . . . that forces municipal councillors to review each and every condominium plan, even if they don't have any major concerns or problems with the proposal. More elaborate condominium plans would still have to be considered by the council.

I understand that the cities of Regina and Saskatoon have lobbied hard for a change to this section. And I certainly support a change that will reduce red tape for all concerned, and will ultimately save taxpayers money by freeing up councillors and city officials to do more important work than have to review something that they know will not change their minds.

Bill No. 21 also contains a new section that would force condominium owners to hold an annual meeting with their new tenants. This meeting now must come within one year of the complex opening. It is extremely important that the management and owners of condominiums be accountable to their tenants. Legally requiring annual meetings is an important step in establishing accountability, and of course, direct communication, which we know is so very important.

However, I am surprised to see that the minister would actually appear to be considering the needs and the protection of condominium owners when the same reassessment program his government is bringing in may be treating these very same people quite poorly.

Mr. Speaker, ever since reassessment categories were announced, our constituencies offices have heard, and I'm sure NDP members' offices have also heard, that the condominium owners are very upset about this new plan. The new assessment categories put condominiums at a different level than other residential property.

Condominiums are assessed at 85 per cent of their property value, while other residential property is assessed at 75 per cent of the value. That's a 10 per cent differential, and that works out to be a lot of money for many of those condo owners who are living on a fixed income.

Many of the residents in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, are seniors that are in condos and they haven't budgeted for that kind of a drastic assessment increase, and they feel that they are being treated unfairly by the government's actions in that regard. In fact a few have called and said that reassessment category for condominiums is an out and out discrimination. So there's very strong feelings in that regard. They view themselves simply as home-owners but this government's property tax policies are not treating them as simple

home-owners.

When my colleague from North Battleford questioned the Minister of Municipal Government on the valuation system during the Committee of Finance, the minister explained that Saskatchewan cities have the ability to apply for subclasses if they feel that it is necessary in order to create more fairness. I view this as total negligence on behalf of the government, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, the ill-planned and poorly designed policies are creating more costly problems for Saskatchewan people. When you are asked how to fix those problems, government simply passes the buck down to the lower level of government. That means that your valuation system for condominiums will certainly cost condo residents more, or all local taxpayers will pay more by way of added paperwork, time, and expenses. It simply creates more hassles for city councils to apply for some developments to have different subclasses.

Mr. Speaker, I think any way you look at it, the government is passing the buck once again. Unfortunately the Saskatchewan people are ultimately the ones faced with the cost of this government's own mistakes. We see it in health care, we see it in education, deplorable highway conditions, and the extreme financial pressure that this government has placed on municipal governments.

Mr. Speaker, I guess my point is that while Bill 21 appears to contain some amendments that would provide better service to condominium residents, this government is certainly not applying this same philosophy to its other major policies.

I also see that once again, near the end of this piece of legislation, the minister has included his own power to change regulations as he sees fit. This is just one more example of this NDP government taking more power over legislation out of this public forum and in behind closed doors. So much for open and accountable government.

Mr. Speaker, while I do have a few more concerns relating to Bill No. 21, I will be glad to put them forward to the minister at a later date. Thank you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are some beneficial portions to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, dealing with condominiums and their tenants, and some of their rights and privileges that they enjoy and how cities and towns will deal with these new properties or how they're developed, Mr. Speaker, how they have access and how the property is dealt with. But there's also some downsides to this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that I think the government needs to take a serious look at.

Therefore at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate on this issue.

Debate adjourned.

(1430)

(Regulatory Reform) Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform Act), 1997. This Act and its companion piece, The Miscellaneous Statutes Consequential Amendments Act, 1997, repeal six obsolete statutes. These Acts also make consequential amendments to other statutes to remove references to these statutes. The six statutes being repealed are no longer used. Mr. Speaker, I will briefly describe each of the statutes that are being repealed.

Number one, The Home Care Act. This Act was passed in 1986. It provided a legislative base for the establishment of home care districts and for the funding and operation of home care services. Now The Health Districts Act provides authority for district health boards to plan, administer, and deliver home-based services. Therefore The Home Care Act is redundant and can be repealed.

Number two, The Hospital Revenue Act. Saskatchewan's health system has traditionally been funded by the province and supplemented by some local funding. Property tax levies were used to provide funds to enhance hospital programs and services, to purchase equipment, and to construct or renovate facilities. As well, municipalities were responsible for a portion of public health funding. On September 26, 1996, the Minister of Municipal Government announced that health and social assistance levies would be eliminated from the property tax base, effective January 1, 1997. The repeal of The Hospital Revenue Act is consistent with the elimination of the health levy from property tax. The Act is therefore no longer required.

Number three, The Medical Care Insurance Supplementary Provisions Act. This Act came into force in 1968 for the purposes of the federal Medical Care Act. It stipulated the provincial authority for administering the medical care plan of the province. The federal Medical Care Act has been repealed and replaced with the Canada Health Act. Therefore this statute is redundant.

Number four, The Medical Scholarships and Bursaries Act. This Act was passed in 1963 to provide for financial assistance to individuals studying medicine. The Act also provided for some funding for short courses, refresher courses, or research projects directly related to the provision of insured services. All obligations pursuant to this Act have been fulfilled and the Act is no longer used. Regulations that provide bursaries for students in a variety of health professions are in place. Therefore this Act can be repealed.

Number five, The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Act. The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan was established pursuant to this Act. In 1989 The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Reorganization Act was passed. It provided authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to change the name of this corporation. Its name was changed to CIC Mineral Interests Corporation in 1990.

CIC Mineral Interests Corporation has been administered by officials at the Crown Investments Corporation since its inception. The Mineral Interests Corporation has been virtually

inactive for the past number of years. Its only activity has been to hold the province's shares in the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc. All but two of these shares have been disposed of.

To save the cost of an additional annual report, auditor fees, and additional administration, we are proposing that CIC Mineral Interests Corporation be wound up effective June 30, 1997. The method to accomplish the wind-up of CIC Mineral Interests Corporation is by repealing this Act.

Number six, The Saskatchewan Hospitalization Act. This Act was passed in 1947 to provide for a province-wide plan for prepaid hospital care. The Health Districts Act passed in 1993 provides for the funding of health services through grants made to district health boards on the basis of a population-needs-based funding formula. As a result of this new funding approach, hospitals are no longer funded through The Saskatchewan Hospitalization Act. This statute can therefore be repealed.

However the eligibility to receive hospital services pursuant to The Saskatchewan Hospitalization Act has been used to determine eligibility criteria for other provincial programs and services. Consequent to the repeal of this Act, a number of amendments to other statutes are included in this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of an Act to repeal miscellaneous obsolete Statutes and to enact transitional provisions and consequential amendments with respect to certain Statutes being repealed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the minister's remarks with respect to what is basically a housekeeping Bill that's being introduced here. I sometimes hesitate to even speak to matters of redundancy because it frightens me to think that one day each one of us here will become redundant as well. And somebody may be saying the same thing as the minister has said about some of these statutes that are no longer necessary or needed.

Mr. Speaker, with those comments, having spoken to our stakeholders, we feel we can move this on to committee.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that the government has recognized that there are indeed too many laws on the books and too many old laws that no longer apply, and that it's time that they be moved off. And perhaps if the government was to consider something like a sunset clause, a lot of these things would disappear on their own or the Bills that remain on the books would have to be justified as to why they should be carried on. It would give everyone an opportunity to evaluate the performance of every statute that we have.

The way we do it today is that finally somebody looks through the book and says, this particular piece of legislation hasn't been used for the last 70 years; maybe we should eliminate it. It takes a long time when you're doing that, Mr. Speaker, because I suspect very strongly that the members of the government

opposite and their drafting people don't look through all the statutes all that often, to determine which ones are currently being used and which ones haven't been used for a considerable period of time.

But it is good to see that the government has recognized that there are some statutes, some laws, on the books, some portions of those, that are no longer valid.

It's interesting to note though, Mr. Speaker, that some of these that the government is repealing deal with some of the cuts that have happened in this province. The municipal tax sharing Act, dealing with the hospital Act, Mr. Speaker . . . the government has taken off that portion, that 2 per cent levy that was applied against all municipal property, and told the municipalities, even though the municipalities were not collecting this directly — they were facilitating the collection but not getting the money directly — the government said, we're taking this off. You can have it, but we're cutting \$17 million further out of your budgets. Mr. Speaker, that's the kind of benefit that the people of Saskatchewan get out of this particular kind of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

They talk about repealing The Medical Scholarships and Bursaries Act. Well I just heard the minister responsible for Health talking the other day about how we need to put something in place to encourage doctors to study and practise in this province. Here we had a statute that dealt with that, Mr. Speaker, and now the government is repealing it. They say it hasn't been used for a very long time. Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe we need to take a look at that and give some reconsideration to that, on how we can use that particular piece of legislation to encourage more doctors to stay in Saskatchewan.

The repeal of some of the Acts dealing with the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Yes indeed the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan is no longer a Crown entity. It's a very, very successful privatization, Mr. Speaker, extremely successful.

This is a company that has gone from borrowing millions and millions of dollars in New York under Allan Blakeney when he was premier, to buying up a significant portion of the fertilizer production around the world, Mr. Speaker, creating for itself and making for itself the largest seller of fertilizer and potash in the world, Mr. Speaker. An extremely successful privatization that is paying immense rewards to the province in taxes, Mr. Speaker.

When we look at various other portions of this Act, Mr. Speaker, Automobile Accident Insurance Act, various ones dealing with . . . such as Hearing Aid Act, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of stakeholders here who should have an opportunity to be questioned and asked whether or not these Acts are not being used and how they affect their particular area, Mr. Speaker. So I move at this time that the debate be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

Consequential Amendments Act, 1997
Loi de 1997 apportant des modifications
corrélatives à certaines lois

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Miscellaneous Statutes Consequential Amendments Act, 1997. This Act is a companion piece to The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 1997.

One of the Acts repealed by that Bill is The Saskatchewan Hospitalization Act. However the eligibility to receive hospital services pursuant to The Saskatchewan Hospitalization Act has been used to determine eligibility criteria for other provincial programs and services. This Bill includes two of the consequential amendments to other statutes required as a result of that repeal. This will accommodate their enactment in French and English as the changes are being made to bilingual Bills.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to make consequential amendments with respect to certain Statutes being repealed.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again in speaking to the Bill that's been presented by the minister, as a Bill to complement the earlier one and of a housekeeping nature, we have no further comments at this time with respect to this particular Bill.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As also in case of the last Bill presented, we have some concerns.

I note in this particular one — it was in the previous Bill also — they're changing the definition of the word, hospital. Well, Mr. Speaker, this particular government has certainly changed the meaning of the word, hospital, in a lot of communities across Saskatchewan — over 52 of them, Mr. Speaker, they have changed the definition of the word, hospital.

In some of the communities, those . . . that term is now used for a boarded-up building — plywood over the windows. When you drive through those communities, Mr. Speaker, they'll say, that was the hospital. It certainly has a new meaning now, Mr. Speaker.

In other areas of the province, Mr. Speaker, the term . . . what used to be called a hospital is now basically called a first aid station. If you're lucky enough to find somebody in there, you may get some service. If that doesn't happen to be the case, you will try, Mr. Speaker — try — to get to a facility somewhere down the road.

In the health care practice, Mr. Speaker, they talk in emergency situations of the "golden hour." And, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of places across this province where that "golden hour" is extremely difficult to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would move that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 12 — The Farm Financial Stability
Amendment Act, 1997**

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food continues to work to ensure the needs of the industry are being met. Ag 2000 directs the provincial government to work with the industry to undertake changes which contribute to the development of family farms, diversification, and value added production.

We have a growing livestock sector and opportunities to diversify for the ... for the diversify for the agriculture community. There is, however, need to ensure that programs which are in place are providing the financial support and security needed for the stability and growth of the industry.

Two such programs are the breeder and feeder associations loan guarantee programs. These programs enable existing and beginning producers who form an association to expand and diversify their livestock operation by providing loan guarantees for associations for the purpose of purchasing cattle. The guarantees provide greater access to credit at favourable interest rates with a limit of collateral requirements. In consultation with the industry representatives, changes to the legislation are being made in order to help associations resolve some operational issues being experienced with the programs.

The proposed amendment to the Act, 1997, will: number one, confirm that an association is the purchaser of cattle and clarify under which circumstances an animal keeper's lien can be applied to the association cattle; number two, clarify provisions for extension of repayment dates, clarify requirements lenders must meet for payment to be made under the guarantee, provide for the right of associations to enter facilities where associations' cattle are kept; and finally, extend the period for prosecuting individuals under The Summary Offences Procedure Act.

I ask members of the Assembly to support this Act, and therefore I move second reading of The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, 1997.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak on behalf of my colleagues on Bill 12, The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, especially when Saskatchewan's farming communities have reached a historic time in terms of ... well in fact terms of their financial stability or otherwise.

Our communities are being pulled apart by increasing centralization because rural schools close, elevators and branch lines close. The people grapple with a whole litany of social ills that are brought on by this government's administration.

Under the NDP government, we are turning into a province that relies on gambling and liquor money to buy our way out of debt. We're experiencing a division and frustration as we grapple with the mess the NDP made out of reassessment, health care, and education — all contributing factors, I might

add, to farm financial stability or otherwise, Mr. Speaker. Rural municipalities are struggling under the burden of severe cut-backs that will leave communities in disrepair.

How are the people of this province dealing with these changing times? Well, Mr. Speaker, as usual, we're adapting. We're dealing with them by returning to our roots of cooperation and initiative; I might add it's in the true way of a true Canadian. We're exercising a good deal of patience, compromise and understanding with the NDP government in this province in this regard.

Farmers are coming together, just as an example, to establish grain terminals and to propose a short-line rail operation. Communities are banding together to save their schools and prevent the further decimation of health care in rural Saskatchewan. There's a new generation of co-ops that are developing as global market forces make it difficult for an individual farmer to compete. And I might add, Mr. Speaker, and still be able to maintain farm financial stability as well.

There's a lot of talk about the growing economy and changing times. Saskatchewan's hog industry is a prime example. The global pork market is growing by 6 per cent annually, and the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool is moving aggressively in a ConAgra-like fashion into the hog business.

In the midst of industry development and expanding livestock markets, it is necessary to re-evaluate our legislation. It is a time in which to clarify the rules that govern livestock production, but only if our objective is to enhance livestock production opportunities for producers in the province.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 12 in some ways removes some existing uncertainty. It's designed to sort out the rights and obligations of government-producer associations, lenders, and animal keepers, or custom operators. In other ways there's the potential here for some additional confusion and red tape and could possibly lead to some hardship as well, Mr. Speaker.

As the legislation stands now, if a producer association has an agreement with a custom operator, the association cannot legally enter the premises where their cattle are kept. And this Bill will change that. But there are some custom operators who have some concerns that they've expressed with respect to the access provisions of the Act.

With respect to the lawful access provisions under the new legislation, it may become possible for the provincial official or provincial supervisor to seize any property where the livestock are kept to make up for a bad debt of the producer association. The government, by clarifying the responsibilities under the guarantee, I might add the government's responsibilities, is in a way protecting lenders, which are the banks, Mr. Speaker, in this case. But in exchange they're placing additional responsibilities onto the custom operators to have to prove the terms of an agreement with the producer association.

We have some other concerns that have been expressed to us, and one is related to the government's extended jurisdiction with respect to this piece of legislation. In this new Bill the government has the final decision on approving custom

operators. Well that could lead to the government having a veto power essentially over a producer association decision to deal with a particular custom operator.

And it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that that goes against the notion of trying to expand a producer base, trying to expand livestock in the province, when you're trying to regulate an industry to that extent. And I do add, because this government seems to like to govern by regulation as much as they do by legislation, it does become a concern for all of us.

There's no qualification in this legislation that the custom operator know or ought to have known he was dealing with a producers association's animals. This again potentially places the custom operator at risk. If the Bill becomes law, custom operators will have to provide the province and the association with a written agreement, a written statement.

We'd like to know: what are the guidelines for these sorts of arrangements? How does the government intend to inform the custom operators that they lose their lien rights if they don't provide such a written statement pursuant to the Act and pre-register a lien as described pursuant to the Act?

So there are a number of unanswered questions with respect to this legislation, Mr. Speaker. And we do need some additional time to consult further with stakeholders on these sorts of matters, particularly the custom operators in the province. And I think as official opposition it's our duty to scrutinize the government Bills very closely and I think it's in the best interest of these custom operators, as well as the public at large, to have some additional time to look into matters pertaining to this Bill.

So I'd ask at this time that we would adjourn debate on this Bill. I would move at this time, Mr. Speaker, that we do adjourn debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 29

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 29 — The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan landlords have been waiting a very long time for this particular piece of legislation. The security deposit that landlords can lawfully charge tenants has not increased in our province since the early 1980s. Simply stated, landlords have been telling the government for years that \$125 is simply not enough to cover the damage that is left behind after some irresponsible tenants make their getaway. These people leave behind a sometimes very unspeakable mess and very extensive damage to their rental property.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's damage deposit is currently by far

the lowest in the country. Increasing the security deposit to one month's rent brings Saskatchewan in line with many other provinces in the country. A full month's rent will in some cases still not cover the damage a small number of tenants leave. Seeing some of the pictures on television about some of the horrific sights that landlords are greeted with on occasion tells me that they are still carrying a high amount of risk whenever they rent to a tenant.

However we have to be fair and equitable with the security deposit. We can't have a deposit that will cover all circumstances, such as those when the amount of damage exceeds one month's rent. That would be unfair to the vast majority of tenants who are reasonable and responsible people.

Mr. Speaker, there have been some in Saskatchewan who aren't in agreement with raising the security deposit. They say that it will put too large of a burden on low income families and seniors who will have trouble covering a security deposit that is equal to one month's rent. And to certain extent I do sympathize with that viewpoint.

This is a large increase for some people. However the Bill will allow new tenants to pay the damage deposit in instalments. I believe this will relieve some of the increased burden all Saskatchewan renters will feel under this amended legislation. Instead of paying the full amount up front, tenants will have the option of paying half the deposit at the start and the other half within 60 days.

Now there are some concerns about this. Some landlords feel that this will still leave them on the hook for some damages. Some say if they don't get the full amount up front and there are some problems with the tenant within the next 60 days, they're not likely to see that second instalment. Some landlords feel that this instalment plan should perhaps be phased out over time once Saskatchewan residents are used to the larger security deposit.

However the system as proposed in this legislation does try to strike a balance between the rights of the landlord and the monetary situation of many tenants. And despite some very legitimate reservations on the part of landlords about the instalment plan, it is still a vast improvement over the current inadequate deposit.

I understand as well the serious reservations of those advocates for low income people. They say that despite this compromise, many will still have trouble coming up with the money to pay the increased deposit. Mr. Speaker, no matter how you cut it, tenants, low income and otherwise, will have to pay more.

But let's look at the other side of the coin. There is a terrible lack of rental property available in some centres in Saskatchewan. Both Regina and Saskatoon have very, very low vacancy rates for rental property.

In particular, people looking for satisfactory accommodations in Saskatoon over the last number of years have had difficulty acquiring it. With vacancy rates below 1 per cent, much of the time apartments are becoming increasingly hard to come by. This puts a difficult burden on many young families, and it also

puts a strain on the thousands of students that attend universities, who tell us it's getting harder and harder to find a good, affordable apartment to stay in while they attend university.

Part of the reason for this, Mr. Speaker, is that very few rental properties are being built in either Regina or Saskatoon. Entrepreneurs have not seen the rental property business as a good one in some time, Mr. Speaker. The return on their investment is simply too low to build any new units. If anything, this situation places more of a burden on potential renters than an increase in the damage deposit.

As the competition for available units becomes more keen in our larger centres and beyond, there is a good chance that monthly rents will go up. For the most part, people who rent apartments in Saskatchewan have faced very reasonable rents over the years. Compare the price of a two-bedroom apartment in Regina or Saskatoon to that in larger centres such as Vancouver or Toronto. On the average one pays around \$500 in Saskatchewan, while in our larger cities in other parts of the country you're going to be paying double of that.

That's what happens when there are too few rental properties available to a growing number of renters. And rents are starting to move up in Saskatchewan as well, and they will continue to move up unless more apartment buildings are being built.

(1500)

Saskatchewan residents have been spared for a long time from huge increases in rent. But I'm afraid unless the atmosphere in Saskatchewan changes and property owners are encouraged to develop more rental properties, our rents will begin to become unaffordable to too many people.

Mr. Speaker, increasing the damage deposit is only one piece of the puzzle in encouraging more development in this area. Like all small-business people in Saskatchewan, landlords have seen many increased costs under this government. Whenever utilities are increased in our province, it is often the landlords that bear the burden. And in the coming years, landlords, like all property owners, will face increases in their property taxes. Some landlords tell us that under the government's property reassessment scheme that they're facing staggering property tax increases.

And let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, the government opposite continues to cut transfers to municipalities. This year both transfers have been cut by another 25 to 30 per cent. Since 1991 local governments have seen millions and millions of dollars taken away from them by the NDP government — a government that decries any cuts they receive from the federal government but think nothing of abdicating their own responsibility to taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, these constant cuts to Saskatchewan municipalities will not only mean severe service reductions at the local government level, but will also necessitate many of those municipal governments to raise their mill rates. We who own our homes know what that will mean for our families. But it'll also have a severe impact on all those who own rental

properties. These people will face thousands of dollars in increases with increased mill rates. Couple that with reassessment, and the financial burden will be too much for many would-be landlords.

Increased taxes for landlords will not only mean some of their increased expenses will be passed along to current tenants, it'll mean fewer people will be willing to develop new properties. It may even necessitate some current landlords taking their property off the market because it just doesn't pay for them to continue renting. Mr. Speaker, unless the atmosphere in Saskatchewan changes, our very low vacancy rate will continue. That undoubtedly will hurt would-be renters more than the increase in the security deposit.

Mr. Speaker, while we support the increase to the damage deposit, there are some aspects of the Bill that do give us some cause for concern. It's becoming readily apparent for the last number of years that this government really doesn't have much in the way of sympathy for landlords. The government and the Minister of Justice have been pulled, kicking and screaming, towards raising the security deposit to a reasonable and realistic level. And in return, they have exacted a high price from landlords, the vast majority of whom are upstanding members of the business community and very honest in their dealings with tenants.

That price has come in a shortened turnaround time for refunding damage deposits and an increased bureaucratic tangle for landlords. Mr. Speaker, currently property owners have 10 days to return the deposit to a tenant or return part of it with a detailed explanation for any part of the deposit that has been kept in order to pay for cleaning or repairs necessary after the tenant vacates an apartment or rental property.

Under this legislation before us the burden on landlords has increased greatly. Instead of 10 days, the property owner will now have only 5 days following the tenant vacating to return the entire damage deposit. And this is not 5 working days, Mr. Speaker. It appears under this legislation the landlord will have 5 calendar days to physically have that deposit back in the hand of their former tenant. In many cases this will simply be an impossibility.

Landlords usually rely on a caretaker to conduct an inspection after the tenant has left. After that inspection is conducted, the caretaker must then report to the landlord. After this, there is an administrative process with paperwork and other details that must be worked out. In the case where a landlord or a company owns many rental units, the administrative process is all the more complicated. Many landlords are telling us that to have all of this done and then get a cheque in the mail in time for it to reach the ex-tenant within that 5-day period will simply be an impossibility.

So I question whether the 10-day waiting period is in fact too long. Given the period of time needed for efficient mail service and all the other work that must be done, 10 days doesn't seem out of line. Legislating a 5-day period does seem to be asking a little much of some, if not all, landlords in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, let's not forget that the bureaucratic web

landlords will have to go through to claim any of the damage deposit will become more burdensome under the legislation proposed as well. Not only will landlords have to do quick inspections in order to attempt to meet the five-day limit, within that time frame, they'll now have to make application to the Rentalsman if they want to keep any or all of the deposit. And I doubt very much if the Office of the Rentalsman will be working weekends in order to facilitate landlords meeting this five-day limit. This provision just doesn't make any sense.

I agree that landlords should return the damage deposit in a reasonable period, but I don't believe five days is reasonable to them, Mr. Speaker. Not when the onus is now on the landlord to make application to the Rentalsman.

Some landlords tell me that what will happen in the end, if this five-day period does go ahead, is that they'll have to begin making automatic applications to the Rentalsman for all vacating tenants just to ensure that they get in under the five-day period in case they do need to keep some of the deposit.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, each application to the Rentalsman that the landlord makes comes with a fee. If they now have to make application for every tenant in order to beat the five-day deadline, that will mean another increased cost for them in the terms of these fees. I question whether this is just another unique way the government has devised to wring in more dollars out of the people of Saskatchewan in the form of hidden taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I also have a concern for those on Social Services. Many landlords are currently very leery about renting to those on Social Services because they've had trouble being reimbursed for damages in the past. Of course most tenants who are on Social Services are responsible, but again there are those few bad apples that do hurt the rest.

While this legislation provides that the government will reimburse landlords for damages left behind by those on Social Services, again it sets up a bureaucratic tangle for many landlords.

Unlike other people, damage deposits for people on Social Services will not be paid up front but rather after the tenant vacates and application is made to the Rentalsman. And I am quite confident there is no way the government will do landlords the courtesy of making good on the damages within five days. Anyone who has dealt with this government knows this.

I am afraid this could leave Social Service people out in the cold. Many landlords, if given a choice between a person on Social Services and a person not on Social Services, will most likely take the person who has a job and is not dependent on the government. This will ensure the landlord will not have to battle the government for his or her rightful money somewhere down the line. This may make it very hard indeed for Social Service recipients to find decent accommodations.

I don't think this is what the government had in mind when they set out this rule, but I'm afraid it will be one of the side-effects.

Mr. Speaker, the goal in this piece of legislation is to find a compromise in terms of the interests of the landlord and the welfare of the tenant. I think the government has done that in terms of the level of damage deposit and the new instalment plan.

However as I have outlined, I am concerned about several other aspects of the Bill. I believe they may do more harm than good, and in the end, tenants will be the losers if they are unable to find a suitable place to call home.

Mr. Speaker, it would be advisable for government to think further about the implications of certain aspects of this Bill, as it contains the potential for further problems to both landlords and tenants.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy today to have an opportunity to make some comments on this particular piece of legislation.

We generally, Mr. Speaker, favour this legislation in our caucus. Obviously we should, because we've lobbied to try to get this legislation on behalf of the Saskatchewan landlords' association for the past five years. In fact they were probably one of the first groups that attended my office after my first election back in 1991-92, and they wanted of course to have some of their problems addressed.

It has taken a long time to get their issues to the forefront of this government's agenda, and so we have to say that we are happy at last to see that it is here.

Clearly this legislation is long overdue, and we sometimes wonder why the government would have avoided this particular piece of legislation when obviously the changes that are made now must be good, in their opinion. Why wouldn't they have been good four years ago? And obviously therefore you have to wonder what the agenda of the government really is. Is it to help the people to solve the problems or is it simply an agenda to try and help themselves be re-elected each time? And of course the latter is understandable but not necessarily justifiable in all actions of government.

And so we would use this as a clear indication of what government should not be about, which is reactionary only to the need to be re-elected. And what a government I think sometimes should do is be reactionary towards the needs of the people and the needs of the province so that it can grow and expand.

Clearly what has happened here is that we have zero people in Saskatoon . . . the tenancy rates of the building up there have been down to zero for a long time. Automatically economists would tell you that that should trigger an investment from the investment community, building more of those kinds of buildings — apartment blocks, condominiums, and that sort of thing. That hasn't happened. Why hasn't it happened? Clearly because there must be an investment opportunity for those dollars that go into that type of facility somewhere else.

So when we did our research, when we were attempting to lobby the government on behalf of these organizations, we

found clearly that we were once again out of sync with our neighbours and in fact there was a flight of capital from Saskatchewan into Alberta. Those dollars that normally are spent in this kind of living accommodation were of course fleeing to Calgary, Edmonton, and places like that. And then we asked the question, why? And obviously the answer had to come back that it was a better investment climate for them.

And the reason was that the particular kind of legislation that we're looking at here today was already in place in Alberta. And the landlords of course clearly had that opportunity to invest in an atmosphere where they could have their dollars treated with some dignity. And we have said to the government for a long time, if you can clearly see that the province is out of sync, why not get at it and get it done?

The underlying current here is that it takes time for this kind of legislation to affect society. It takes time in that, even though you now are on a level playing-field and you get this province in sync with Alberta, investors are a wary bunch and of course they're a little slow to move. And so it's going to take some time for them to accept the fact that these changes are real.

It'll take some time for it to get through the system so that they will understand that it's there. And it will also take some time for them to line up contractors and to get land development and that sort of thing into place. And realistically what you're looking at here is an improvement in the housing numbers only happening probably two years from now in a place like Saskatoon where you have the zero rate.

So that is one of the things that makes us wonder, is this timed only for the next election so that we suddenly start to have a bit of job boom in Saskatoon about the time of the next election being called, or was this a genuine need to try to help people? And so we question the government's motives. But we don't question the need for this legislation and we do encourage the government to complete this task and to continue with it.

It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that things had to go so far that we had to have a landlords' strike in order to demonstrate the need for this kind of legislation. We believe that this problem could have been addressed without those kinds of drastic measures having had to be taken.

And we do endorse the Bill and we congratulate the government for at last having done this particular job that needs to be done here. We feel that it is a fair Bill that will provide balance to all of the parties involved.

We feel that it will provide a balance for landlords who have faced the results of damaged properties. We've seen all kinds of accounts on television, some in the newspapers, over the last few years. We don't think that those kinds of extreme measures were necessary in order to demonstrate the need for this legislation. However they did happen; they were a reality.

And we are happy though that the government has seen the other side of the issue, which of course is that the tenants also need to have some protection in society as well. We believe that there is some of that balance in the legislation.

We are of course going to ask questions of the minister as we get into the discussions later on in the democratic process here. As we get to ask questions, get answers on a back-and-forth basis, we will be making sure that what we assume to be there is there. And we want to have both sides obviously protected in both of these situations.

(1515)

So we were particularly worried about the social assistance aspect of this problem. Naturally Social Services has a great burden in terms of providing housing for a lot of people in our province, people who don't have the wherewithal to find their own housing or to build their own. Social Services assists greatly in that area — that's a need in our society that we accept as the role of society.

Unfortunately there were some areas there where there wasn't accountability on the part of those tenants that fell into that group; that some of that is being addressed and Social Services is taking on some of the responsibility. That responsibility, we believe, will be transferred back to the tenants who are in some cases — not all obviously — but in some cases they are not good corporate citizens, not good citizens in society. I guess not corporate, but not good citizens in society. They have a tendency to be destructive of other people's property. And while that's probably less than 1 per cent of that total population, the reality is that we have to cope with that.

And if business people are faced with those kind of extra losses, often they will seal off that availability to all of the people in that particular group. And that wasn't fair either. But it was a natural . . . it's a human thing to have happen. And we are glad that that is being addressed, because it needed to be a thing that's straightened out in order to provide good housing for all of the people involved in our society.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess in conclusion we will say that we are satisfied with this Bill being in the right direction, and as we ask our questions, we'll reinforce that. If we find a problem, we will attempt to correct it through amendments at that time, or whatever else is necessary. But we don't think that's going to happen. It looks like it's not too bad.

So we think we will let this go on to second readings and . . . or it won't have to stay in second readings any longer; it can progress. And so we will not move to adjourn or anything, and we will do nothing more to hold this up.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 23

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 23 — The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Act/Loi sur l'exécution des jugements canadiens** be now read a second time.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll only speak briefly to Bill 23 today as it appears to be quite a non-controversial

piece of legislation regarding our justice system.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 23 appears to do some work towards getting all provinces on the same page in terms of the enforcement of civil judgements from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. I understand the changes that are proposed in the Bill stem from a nationwide conference which had as one of its main purposes, crafting some rules that would make it easier to enforce civil judgements between different provinces and territories.

A Bill like this does seem to make sense, Mr. Speaker, in that it seems ludicrous that it would be possible for some people to escape their duties under civil judgements against them, simply by going to another province. And if they can't escape from their obligations under the law completely, they can certainly slow down the process to a crawl, forcing new hearings to take place in their new province of residence. It's ridiculous to think that in one nation such a thing is possible.

The issue of provincial jurisdiction is an important one. Provinces do have rights and responsibilities separate and apart from the federal system and other provinces and territories. And we must respect those powers. However, it's positive that these 10 different provinces and 2 territories can get together from time to time to hammer out a system like the one proposed before us today.

It is a better system for Canadians. And the fact the legislation was crafted under the terms of this conference and will be basically identical in every province, is a good thing in my estimation. We are, after all, one country. Simply moving to another province should not be available to a person to get out from under the ruling of any civil court in the country. But the positive effects of this Bill will not be fully realized until all the provinces get on board. I understand Saskatchewan is only the third or fourth province so far, to bring this Bill before its legislature. Others hopefully will follow suit shortly.

Under the legislation that was produced by the uniform law conference, judgements are recognized from province to province, and sets out terms to avoid having to actually re-try a case in another jurisdiction. This helps to streamline our overburdened legal system. Mr. Speaker, anything we can do to speed up the legal processes in our country should be done, be it civil law, as is the case here, or criminal law.

We have to ensure our legal system keeps moving ahead and I think this piece of legislation will help accomplish that. It will allow civil judgements to be registered in different provinces. That's not really the case at the present time, where enforcement of judgements in different jurisdictions is difficult and unreliable.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of limits placed on the enforcement of judgements from province to province however. According to the minister, one of those reasons is public policy. We'll want to know just what those public policy reasons could be. The minister's words do seem to be a little hazy on this count and we'll have some questions regarding that and some other aspects of the Bill.

The Bill, like most others brought in by the government, also

sets out provisions for regulations. We'll want some assurances from the government that the government public policy reasons and its right to make certain regulations pursuant to the Bill will also be done in consultation with other provinces. After all, what good is a Bill like this if government policy and differing regulations undermine its effectiveness. So we will also have a number of questions in this area as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is a fairly simple piece of legislation, but it's also a very important piece of legislation. It's also a piece of legislation that sooner or later will be in place in all provinces of Canada, and we hopefully believe that will happen. This will make our legal system more sensible and will work more effectively for more people. And once again, any time we can accomplish this, it can only be a good thing, Mr. Speaker. Any further clarifications we will be able to follow through during the normal process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments as well to Bill No. 23, The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Act, before we allow this Bill to move into committee. Some of the other members have already indicated that there are a number of issues that I think when you take a clear look at it, the fact that we're looking at interprovincial — I guess if you will I'm going to use the word, trade . . . but the fact that interprovincial boundaries are coming down is certainly something that's quite important.

While this is a non-controversial Bill which improves the way in which legal judgements are enforced between Canadian jurisdictions, it's taken a time to arrive at this point. And I understand that to date the somewhat . . . this Bill as such, has passed in the legislatures of British Columbia and Prince Edward Island. It's a Bill that has been recommended by the Uniform Law Conference of Canada. And as has been indicated, it's a Bill and a piece of legislation that other provinces will be bringing forward and certainly will be implemented across Canada.

I think it shows the cooperation that can be achieved between provinces. And I think that's very important, especially when it comes to a Bill of this nature dealing with justice. It's a piece of legislation that improves the administration of justice either on the criminal or civil side, and it's certainly of interest to our caucus.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think as well we're mindful today of the young people from this community that have put their heads together, concerned about the way that they feel society may look at young people as a result of the Young Offenders Act and a number of the problems that have arisen in this city, and the fact that they're in Ottawa today dealing with . . . or hoping to meet with the federal minister or certainly federal members of parliament regarding some of the suggestions and views they have regarding the Young Offenders Act.

I think that a Bill like this will certainly open up the door for better dialogue, if you will, between jurisdictions in Canada to arrive at a more fair means of addressing criminality in our country, to addressing judicial issues, and making sure that the interests of individuals, be they innocent individuals specifically, are certainly adhered to and everyone is treated

fairly.

So I would see by the Bill, Mr. Speaker, that while it's quite non-controversial, that I don't believe there's any point in slow-walking or slowing the movement of the Bill, and not proceeding with it, I think it's important that we get into further debate and address some questions in committee. And I just want to thank you for having had a moment just to raise the issues that I've raised and we look forward to further debate and discussion as we enter the stage of debate on this piece of legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat Vote 25

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to introduce her officials, please.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Today I'm joined by Ernie Lawton, the acting secretary of the Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat; Donavon Young, the assistant secretary of Metis Affairs; and John Reid, the executive director of policy and planning.

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to the minister and her officials. It's certainly a pleasure to enter into debate on Indian and Metis Affairs estimates and the number of issues and concerns that are certainly in the works right now.

And I guess I'm going to bear right down on one of the main issues that arises out of my area, and it's probably an issue that's throughout the province. And it's regarding a recent court ruling that has given the Metis the same hunting privileges as the aboriginal community across the province of Saskatchewan. And I know that a number of people are quite concerned about this.

I think in some ways the concern arises from the fact of the process that is being used and whether or not some of the Metis community may be, if you will, abusing their rights at this time versus what the aboriginal community has shown through the years and how they've . . . Well people would complain about aboriginal hunting and the fact that they can hunt basically all year, and some of the styles. I think in most cases most individuals in the aboriginal community, and I would suggest even the Metis community, certainly have a lot of respect for wildlife and give serious thought and consideration to hunting privileges.

But first of all I guess what I would like to ask, Madam Minister, is: the government had earlier on, when the laws had changed and the law had been struck down that allowed . . . opened the door actually to Metis hunting, the government had indicated that they were going to appeal the ruling. And I'm wondering, Madam Minister, if you can indicate to us today

where you are regarding this current ruling — whether it is under appeal and what's being done.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you. Yes it is under appeal at the moment. I just want to clarify that the only hunting and fishing rights that are in question here are subsistence rights — that's essentially for food. And I just wanted to clarify that. But it is under appeal and we're going to continue along that path until we get a more definitive legal opinion.

Mr. Toth: — I thank you, Madam Minister. And, Madam Minister, while you may be clarifying that with you and I, and I think a lot of people may be aware of that, I believe in the aboriginal community that has been the reason they have been given and were granted that right to hunt, was for food.

The concern that many people have though is they . . . When you have people, especially I note towards the Manitoba-side of my constituency . . . there's been some complaints that have come to my office about the number of hunters . . . or the number of shots that have been fired. And people have, I guess, had even some fear of the fact that there just seems to be some indiscriminatory hunting at times, and they're wondering whether or not they should allow even children out into yards because of the fact that when the door was opened . . . The fact is we were probably dealing with individuals who weren't really from the area.

(1530)

And I think most people when they go hunting, most hunters when they go hunting like to take note of the surroundings that they're working in, that they're hunting in, to make sure that they're not putting individuals at risk — say there's a farmyard over here or there's one 2 miles over and it's that direction. And I think the feeling that I got from a number of callers is that in some cases they weren't quite sure, or felt that individuals that were out hunting were not familiar with the surroundings and shots would be fired. There was a fear that there was quite an indiscriminate — I don't want to use abuse — but indiscriminate use of firearms and the feeling for their safety.

And I'm wondering, Madam Minister, what the department is doing to address these concerns and to make sure that indeed the hunting that is taking place at the current time by Metis, is following the rules that are in place, and that they are hunting for subsistence or to provide food for themselves. What's the department doing in that matter? And how is the department also monitoring to make sure that Metis hunters are quite well aware of the surroundings and are making sure that they're keeping the safety of other individuals in mind as they go out hunting.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The involvement of Indian and Metis Affairs in this issue is really only as it pertains to questions of rights. Issues of hunting safety and those kinds of issues are all matters that the Department of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) is responsible for. So it might be best to raise those questions again with them.

But all I can say is that the rights question does not negate the safety issue, and all the safety provisions that normally apply in

the province should be in effect on this. But again, like I say, our only involvement in this issue is on the rights issue and on the appeal.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I think, Madam Minister, we should also acknowledge the fact the Metis association of Saskatchewan have come out, they've raised some questions and I firmly believe that indeed when leadership in any community, whether it's the aboriginal community or the Metis association, would question how individuals use their rights in hunting laws, that they would certainly want to pass on to them that those rights do not give them an open season if you will; that they have to follow certain rules and guidelines.

And I guess what I would like to say is I certainly commend the Metis association for their stand and for coming out and pointing out the fact that they didn't want to see abuses, because certainly it then would be reflected upon their community. And I think they want to build a good working relationship with other people across this province.

There has been a rumour floating around as well, Madam Minister, and whether this comes under your department or whether it comes under SERM I'm not sure, but the fact that there may be even out-of-province hunters coming in, hunting under the privileges of Metis hunting. And I'm wondering, Madam Minister, whether indeed there might be some truth to this, whether or not there has been cases of out-of-province, and what is being done. Like I say, this may fall and move into the SERM as well, but I'm wondering if you can give a response to that, please.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Two things really: I'll clarify first of all that the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan is concerned also about these issues that you raise and I think is meeting on a regular basis with SERM on these issues. But under the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement, the rights provision does include cross-border rights. So if people are doing this, it would certainly be within the present ruling that the court has laid out.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister, because I wasn't totally aware of that — so I appreciate that. So when the question is raised, I can indicate that this is an area where we do have some agreement in cross-border shopping or, if you will, cross-border whatever, and that indeed if someone were to come and . . . Being as I'm on a border community and border constituency, we tend to see that more than you would in the central part. And I certainly can inform individuals that that person would certainly have that right and that privilege based on the interprovincial agreements.

Madam Minister, I'm just wondering where we're at with regards to specific land entitlements. And is there . . . have we seen a number of land transactions over the past year regarding specific land entitlements? How many pieces of property? At what value? And at the same time, the question out there is the problem regarding taxation, and I would like to know what your department has been doing to address this concern that's been raised by SARM over the last few years.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — First of all I'll give you an update on the specific claim settlements. There's currently nine in Saskatchewan, providing first nations with approximately 61

million to purchase 121,472 acres of land to attain reserve status. Now of that amount, 43,011 acres have attained reserve status. So we're about a third of the way completed on that particular package.

Mr. Toth: — Okay. Did you want to respond to the last question?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Sorry about that, I knew you'd asked another question. It's on the tax loss compensation. Well you were at the SARM convention, so you would know that that was certainly a matter that they were raising both directly with the federal government and in cooperation with people like yourself, the members of the opposition, and our own government.

Now one of the, I guess, complicating features is there's really two parts to the discussion. Part is the part that affects SARM directly and the other part is the part that affects schools and school divisions. And really the only part of the discussion that SARM has been involved in has been the part that's particular to concerns of rural municipalities.

I do believe there have been discussions very recently and that there have been some improvements in the offer, certainly not as good yet as we were hoping, but there still is some unresolved loose ends as far as how it would affect other people like the school boards.

So we're still working on it. We're hoping to achieve a resolution, at minimum a compromise, if not being able to get everything that we had hoped for. And I'm just hopeful we can resolve this within the next few weeks.

Mr. Toth: — Madam Minister, am I correct in stating that the whole tax question basically is something that falls under federal jurisdiction and that your role as far as the province, is basically standing and supporting SARM and the problems they're having and trying to address it to make sure that there is a fair settlement, that the federal government is aware of the problems.

Because I think, Madam Minister, you're aware — or you will be aware and I know the Minister of Highways is going to be aware — of the fact that it's not just the educational component, but certainly it's the fact that there's more goods going to be travelling on our roads. And as more and more land acres are swallowed up through treaty entitlements and specific land and claim entitlements and these roads are going to have to be maintained and there isn't a dollar value there, it's an issue which down the road may fall into the lap of the provincial government.

And so I think it's quite imperative that your department, working in conjunction with other departments in the province, certainly work, do the best you can in making certain that the federal government is aware of the multiple problems that will and can arise as a result of more land being eaten up through these entitlements and agreements.

And I would just like to know, Madam Minister, exactly what has been done to date. I know you've mentioned you've been in

discussion, but maybe you could give us a little more of a background as to where you're going, where you hope to be at the end of the day. And I think you made a comment just a moment ago, you're working for the best that you possibly can.

From the last I've heard, it seems to me the federal government is backing off some of the original commitments as to where they thought they might be regarding settlements as far as dollar values; so that there'd be some appropriate funds available to address the questions and concerns out there.

So I'm wondering if you could update us, Madam Minister, on what has transpired to date, where we are today, whether or not there are any meetings coming up in the immediate future to address the ongoing problems.

Certainly the upcoming federal election may put that off for awhile, but I think it's an issue that certainly can be raised during the federal election. I'd be surprised if political parties don't grab that and don't — especially in areas like Saskatchewan and Alberta; I think Manitoba to a degree as well — don't raise that issue because it is something that, as taxpayers, is going to end up becoming a responsibility for us if the federal government certainly doesn't address its responsibility in this area.

So I wonder if you could just bring us up to date on that, Madam Minister.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I guess I would just start by saying our whole goal in the treaty land entitlement process and the specific claims that Ottawa, as you characterize it correctly, are directly responsible for specific claims; they're not a responsibility of the province. What our goal has been in this is to resolve a lot of historic and long-standing issues about agreements that were made, I guess a long time before any of us were on the scene, but certainly they were agreements between governments existing at the time.

The other comment I want to make is when you look at the total amount of land involved, at the end of the day it'll represent about 2 per cent of the land mass of Saskatchewan. And I say that just to put it in perspective a bit because people, when they hear these acreages and what not, who aren't used to thinking in terms of acres, may think this is a great deal more land than it is. And it is a significant amount of land, but it is about . . . it will at the end of the day be about 2 per cent of Saskatchewan's land base.

We've certainly been concerned about this issue because, while we all live together, and reserves of course border on RMs (rural municipality) and on other communities, and we just feel that it's going to set a very bad tone for community relations if the federal government does not follow through with its responsibility to make up this tax loss.

So again, we work very closely with SARM on this. We would not take any unilateral action without their involvement. And I certainly have been working closely, keeping everybody informed, and at the end of day we'll tend to go with their wishes regarding whether they consider this to be an adequate compensation.

(1545)

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister, and I certainly would also like to commend the SARM delegates and certainly their board of directors for the initiatives they've taken as well in addressing this question because it's . . . like I say, it's an issue that basically hits them directly to start off with, but down the road, if it isn't . . . if there isn't a proper resolve, it certainly can affect all of us as taxpayers.

Madam Minister, you also mentioned that if you put the land base into perspective, and it represents roughly about 2 per cent of the actual land base of the province, the facts are, even in the area that I represent — and I look at a number of sales that have taken place over the last two years — I would think people would say that 2 per cent is awful low compared to the number of acres. Because we've seen it in parcels around and there aren't a lot of other free acres. The problem is it's a parcel over here, and then there's maybe a 4- or 5-mile stretch and then it's another parcel over here.

And that's where the problem is starting to arise for municipalities, is that you . . . In building roads you've got an area that may run through what eventually is going to have reserve status on it and then you've got areas that have 4 or 5 or 6 miles of road that is municipal road and then you're into another reserve base.

And I think even in the . . . Along the Qu'Appelle some of the reserves are now looking at even looking a lot more — if I can use the word, seriously — at trying to actually buy properties that are right adjacent to the reserve, which makes it a lot easier to work with. And certainly makes it, I think as far as the public out there and even RMs, is a lot more compatible for people to swallow and accept the fact. And there isn't anyone that I'm aware of that would certainly feel that the aboriginal community should not have their treaties finally resolved and recognized and that they should not have access to property.

So I think the more that the reserves and the leadership within the reserves looks and takes a serious look at buying property adjacent to the reserve rather than 10 miles away, 20 miles away, 5 miles away, and little small parcels all over, I think it's certainly . . . it speaks well to the local community. And I think they create even a better love relationship — I guess if I can use that term — between communities, amongst communities, just by the fact that they have consolidated their reserve and looked at ways in which they can utilize their reserve or this funding more appropriately and basically meet the needs of individuals.

I think at the end of the day as well, Madam Minister, if I understand correctly in chatting with some of the aboriginal community that I have over the past few years, there are certainly a lot of . . . A lot of the local reserves are taking a lot of incentives and initiatives to try and address some of the problems, especially in the area of unemployment; especially in the area of poverty, and I see some of the initiatives being taken on some of the local reserves.

I know the White Bear Reserve, while someone might look at White Bear and say well it's a casino, it's their . . . it's the

means to provide all the funding they need to look after their community. But I think I look beyond that. I look at an issue that basically came to play about even seven or eight years ago and the development of oil on the reserve; that, from talking to some of the leadership, I can see where the leadership themselves are looking at ways and alternative methods of providing for their people rather than relying on governments *per se* well on to the near future and expecting someone else to also to look after them.

I'm wondering, Madam Minister, what your department is doing in talking to local leadership or leadership within the province about assisting them in trying to meet some of the needs they perceive out there as to how they look after . . . how they provide. I think for far too long too many people see the welfare system as a means that's been the only way that many people in the aboriginal community could subsist.

I would suggest to you that even amongst the aboriginal community, there are people who would like to get off the welfare system, welfare rolls. And I'm wondering if your department is looking into or working with or even offering suggestions whereby many of the reserves could find other methods of, say, deriving income and providing for themselves rather than looking to either the provincial or the federal government, through government programs, to provide for the needs of their community.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well that's a big bunch of stuff all in one question, but I'll try to give a bit of an overview, and then if you have more specific questions, we could get into those.

I guess first of all, just some of the problems you alluded to that are created by a patchwork quilt of communities, and what we're finding around Saskatchewan is that necessity is indeed the mother of invention, and that as these kinds of situations develop communities are finding ways to come together and come up with servicing agreements and other types of agreements that are resolving some of these problems.

I mean we've dealt with things like road issues, occupants on Crown land, Forest Management Licence Agreement, water rights projects; there's conservation and development area authorities, school divisions. So there's a large number of interests that have to be considered, and one of the roles that SIMAS (Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat) plays in some of the agreements is to facilitate the discussion, to make sure that we've got the appropriate people to be able to solve the problem.

But if we do encounter problems that seem insurmountable under the current processes, we then have to look, I guess, at what we need to do to improve the processes to continue to have a harmonious state of affairs in Saskatchewan.

As far as the White Bear example that you use, my recollection is that they had a golf course before they had a casino, and a number of other businesses on White Bear. And I certainly see a very positive development recently being the establishment of the First Nations Bank, because of course probably in any small town the two first buildings that would have gone up probably would have been the bank and the church. And certainly the

ability for people to access banking services and investment advice are an important part of the development of an area.

So I think as first nations people have more access to these kinds of professional services, we're going to see I think, a very rapid improvement in the whole investment activity that's going on in that community, especially as more dollars become available through the TLE (treaty land entitlements) process.

Also if you look at how people are moving forward in the first nations area with various government departments, as well as having a relationship with SIMAS, the first nations also have relationships with every department of government. So whether it's mining, or forestry, or curriculum, or the tourism agreement with Economic Development, or the service delivery agreements with the Department of Social Services, health care, other areas, I would say there's such rapid movement going on on all fronts that really our biggest concern should be education and how we're going to make sure that everybody's got the skills they need in order to keep up with this very rapid movement in the area of jobs and economic development and service delivery.

To me that's a bigger concern at the moment than the development side. They seem to be coming. The problem is making sure there's enough people in place with all the particular skills.

In aid of that, SIMAS has an employment development program where we're actually going in directly and working with employers to make the links to both Indian and Metis educational institutions, but as well to the community colleges and the universities to help get the training in place to make sure that people have access to the jobs that are being created and the jobs that exist already in large workforces like the health sector.

But also under those agreements, one of the side bar things that's going on is they're sitting with their procurement officers for the health districts and looking at what some of the procurement opportunities might be as far as providing goods and services to health districts that are normally . . . now some of them are purchased out of province and in other places.

So it's really looking at opportunities for jobs, for economic development, and then making sure that the corresponding education is in place to make that a successful experience in whichever particular sector the agreement's signed with. Most of our agreements at the moment are in the health sector, but we're also developing agreements with other major industries in the province which, because we're in a partnership, I don't feel free to announce until we've both signed our name to the paper. But it's something that's been working very well as far as accessing people to the existing jobs and economy.

Mr. Toth: — I thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, you're quite right, White Bear's golf course was there long before the casino. And while I haven't been able to have the privilege of golfing on it since they've completed the back nine, I understand it's . . . from what I saw of the front nine, if the back nine is anywhere as interesting a course, it's an interesting course to certainly golf on. But it's the . . . Sounds like the

Labour minister's been out there and has enjoyed golfing there as well.

And there are other initiatives. Certainly north of Broadview we have Last Oak, we have the ski hill, we have a golf course out there as well. And what I find interesting, Ochapowace Reserve I believe is involved in a hotel development in town here. They are getting into Wagu cattle — working with a Japanese firm to see if they can develop the grazing of Wagu beef in the province of Saskatchewan. And I find it interesting.

I haven't had the privilege of actually taking a look at it yet. It seems to me, I'm not sure, Madam Minister, if you've even had the privilege of having some barbecued Wagu beef, but I understand it's actually pretty good. And one of these days I'll get out there and hopefully they'll have some available.

But I guess what I was really wondering, Madam Minister, what role your department takes when it comes to economic development initiatives reserves may come with. Or do you leave that strictly to the Department of Economic Development, or as a ministry do you get involved in trying to give reserves some information that . . . and put them in touch with individuals or departments that would certainly assist them as they would look to design or develop ideas that may have been brought to their attention or they've been working on? Ideas which, in the future, will develop into job opportunities for the young people.

And I'm just going to, before I sit down, just mention I think just recently there was a signing of a document, or not a document but an agreement, that I believe it opens an avenue for post-secondary education. I'm not sure — correct me if I'm wrong — but it seems to me, and I'm just going by what I remember of the news regarding, I think it was the aboriginal or was it the Metis community on an educational program, I believe through SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), to open up the doors for other educational opportunities. And I just don't have all the details but I . . . (inaudible) . . . remember seeing that.

So I guess what I'm saying is, Madam Minister, what does your department do to facilitate areas in which reserves feel they can certainly not only educate their young people but also provide job opportunities through economic development programs or initiatives that they feel would be workable on the reserves?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well again this is a big question. We do largely work in a facilitative role, making sure people get in contact with the right people. For example, in discussions around telephones, making sure that the right people have met with people at SaskTel. You know, they've opened their first nations call centre. So largely our role is just facilitative, and once they're hooked up with the professionals in a particular area, then that's the relationship that counts, is the one where they're hooked up to the appropriate place in government to get their work done. But we sometimes operate as a window into government for those discussions.

The other thing is working with INAC (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada). And of course one of the difficult questions for the province always is to keep in perspective those things

which the federal government is responsible for funding and those things which the province is responsible for funding. Because when you're trying to play catch-up, it's a bit of an expensive proposition and we want to make sure that the federal government stays an active participant in the process going on in economic development.

But again I would reiterate that I think kind of the end of the problem we're on right now is not that things aren't happening, it's that they're happening so quickly we have to make sure we move in to facilitate the education and training supports and other things to make sure that these many projects that are getting off the ground have as much chance for success as possible.

(1600)

Mr. Toth: — Madam Minister, just another thought that crossed my mind, and I was just at the opening of the Keystone Cup last week, last Thursday evening to be exact, in Grenfell. And I happened to have the privilege of chatting with a couple of women from one of the local reserves, and this question of gaming and casinos was raised.

I remember talking to this particular lady, I believe about 3 or 4 years ago when they opened up their school on the Ochapowace Reserve, the Kahkewistakaw School. And at that time the talk of VLTs (video lottery terminal), that was just in its infancy, and casinos, and the concern that was raised by a number of women who were at that meeting and at that opening, they were quite concerned about the fact that casinos would maybe become a reality in Saskatchewan, certainly the availability of VLTs in the community.

And I guess I just have to bring forth the point that this very person did mention again that since they have come to fruition, they have seen . . . they have worked and been, I guess, quite diligent in trying to educate their people as to some of the problems that can arise if there aren't some controls. And I might add as well that they're not really all that pleased with the casino development and I think they just reiterate some of the concerns that other individuals have. But I just wanted to bring that to your attention since you are the minister responsible for Gaming and will probably get into some questions on that a little later.

But it is a concern out there and it creates a problem not only in the aboriginal community; it creates a problem in the white community. It creates a problem for a lot of people.

The thing I wanted to bring up right now, Madam Minister, was the fact that I believe the federal government has offloaded a number of its responsibility when it comes to welfare rolls. And I'm wondering, does that have a problem . . . or is that something that your department deals with or is that strictly an issue that is handled by the department of welfare?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well that's a very timely question because next . . . well actually this week, Thursday evening, we're beginning a meeting of ministers from across Canada responsible for Indian and Metis affairs on those very questions — the federal offloading and the input by first nations and

Metis people into the social policy renewal process in Canada.

Because of the conditions of both benign and active neglect that took place over many years, and some of the very oppressive, early conditions with Indian agents and what not on reserves, we've really created a situation here that governments can't just walk away from because governments were very instrumental in creating some of the conditions that have ended us up where we are now.

Again one of the problems — and it was reflected in the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People — that if you're going to be playing catch-up the cost savings will not be immediate. In fact it may be a little more expensive for awhile and then the cost savings will start to become apparent a little bit down the road.

But what we're hoping to do at the meetings Thursday and Friday is to figure out as provinces what the best way to approach this situation is with Ottawa. And then with the participation of the national Indian and Metis men's and women's organizations and representatives that will be coming to that meeting, to understand clearly their view of the social policy renewal process and how they feel we can maximize the opportunities within that process to deal with some of the long-standing poverty and underdevelopment issues in those communities.

So this will be, I'm sure, quite an interesting meeting. You don't have long to wait to see what happens because it will be this week.

Mr. Toth: — Well I think, Madam Minister, you use the word quite right — timely. And it would seem with a federal election in the offing you couldn't ask for better timing for a meeting of this nature, especially when there are a number of concerns. And I'm sure that other provinces across Canada have a lot of the same concerns that the province of Saskatchewan has, and hopefully, Madam Minister, at the end of the day, there are some issues that there's agreements on. Or certainly if not total resolve, but a commitment to resolve, with a commitment from the federal government that indeed they are going to certainly make sure that they live up to many of the treaties that they entered into years ago — treaties that provinces didn't enter into; they were entered into at the federal level. And as they offload their responsibility on provincial governments, while the Minister of Finance federally can suggest that they're on their way to meeting their targets, I guess as they offload onto the provinces, it's a lot easier to meet targets in that manner.

I would also be remiss if I didn't mention the fact I think the provincial Finance minister as well talks about meeting targets. But it's easy when you can offload some of those problems onto other, third parties. So it just seems to be an ongoing process.

But I certainly would wish you well. And I would trust, Madam Minister, that when you meet with your counterparts from across Canada with the federal government on Thursday and Friday, that indeed some of the issues that have been raised today are issues that are going to be pursued at length and pursued quite vigorously; so that down the road Finance

ministers and governments in the province of Saskatchewan aren't going to have to be always dealing with it, but we can work towards a final resolve.

And I don't anticipate you'll be able to come to that final resolve in a two-day meeting, but it certainly, I think, opens the door for these issues to be discussed and certainly pursued, and indeed the federal government be made aware of its commitment and its responsibility.

So with that, Madam Minister, I'll certainly wait for a response and allow other members to get into the debate. And I'll just say right now I would expect, Madam Minister, that you will pursue some of the concerns with all the vigour that is available. And what I've seen in the past in your actions, I think, Madam Minister, you can certainly hold your place with any minister across Canada.

And so I wish you well, and I'll allow some other members in and certainly bring up some other questions later. Thank you.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. First of all, Madam Minister, I want to welcome you and your officials to this portion of the estimates. As an opening comment, I just want to illustrate some of the problems we're having in northern Saskatchewan when it comes to the Indian and the Metis people.

A huge majority of my discussions and conversations in past estimates has been with the Metis people. And specifically the reason why I do this, Madam Minister, is basically with the strength and the dollars and the organization behind the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations representing the first nations, or treaty people as they're known, they have a fairly well-organized approach to presenting some of their concerns and dealing with some of their problems.

That's not to say that the first nations of course aren't given priority with the Indian and Metis Affairs critic with the Liberal caucus. What we're saying is that they have the resources and they have the technical ability and certainly the experience to come and bring some of the concerns right to your doorstep.

The second part of the equation and the reason why we're focusing on the Metis, in the past and also this year, is the simple fact that the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan and the Metis people of Saskatchewan as a whole don't have the resources available to them to continue to build a strong lobby. They're certainly a very gifted bunch of people that are working within the organization, and they do have a number of challenges in terms of the size of the province and of course the number of people that they're able to employ because of their meagre amount of funding.

So really a lot of the questions that we have today will be based on the Metis part of your budget for that simple reason, is they haven't got the money nor the technical assistance nor the proper support packages in place to really mount the challenge.

Now every time we start talking about aboriginal people in general, a lot of people right away in their minds begin thinking about hunting violations. And they start thinking welfare rates

and they start talking about mismanagement of funds. They start talking about crime. They start talking about all the different problems associated with the aboriginal community.

And I think a very important thing, Madam Minister, here is that . . . the key thing is you must dispel all those myths. We must start, as you mentioned a number of times, a fresh start in looking at the aboriginal people in Saskatchewan. And the example I'm using today are the Metis.

To begin to understand what we need to do for the Metis, Madam Minister, we have to take the time to understand the Metis, what this is all about. And on many occasions, on many occasions in northern Saskatchewan, we hear of many fine families, Metis families, that have done very, very well because they had a strong family unit, they had strong support, and they went on and done things on their own. Very, very successful Metis people. We never hear of those people.

And when you pick up a paper, in many papers . . . and I'll give you an example of some of the headlines in this document here. It talks about victims, it talks about violence, and it talks about death. And who are the people involved, Madam Minister? — is our aboriginal people. Now whether they're Metis or first nations, I have no idea. And this is how the media portray a lot of aboriginal people, because the huge majority of our problem amongst the aboriginal people is directly related to some of our problems when it comes to governmental support, recognition of our challenges, and above all else a lack of understanding by all governments.

Now when I hear the member from Moosomin speak about hunting violations, you know, it's unfair — it's unfair of us to focus on the Metis. When the Metis got their hunting rights it was constitutionally valid that they had their rights, they enjoy these rights. Today now as soon as the Metis get these hunting rights, all of a sudden there is headlines again — Metis hunting rights being exploited, Metis hunting rights being abused.

Well, Madam Minister, there's been 200, 300, 400 Metis people approach me. And they've been telling me that the abuse is not caused all by us. Yes, there are abusers out there in every race, colour, and creed; there are abusers out there. But why, Madam Minister, all the problems with the hunting problems, why are the Metis being singled out? How do you know it's a Metis bullet that killed that moose or that deer?

Now I'm not here to argue about whether the Metis are abusing the system or not. What I'm here to do today is to explain to you that if you wish to begin to address the problems that are perceived by a lot of Saskatchewan people and the media and perhaps by governments, that the Metis people are creating a problem amongst the management of our resources and in particular our wildlife, then what do we do about it? We don't have rallies condemning the Metis hunting rights, we don't challenge the Metis hunting rights in courts.

Madam Minister, we begin to work with the Metis community to set up policies, to set up ways in which we can deal with this problem. We begin to enter into good co-management deals and negotiations. We begin to take the time to truly understand what is meant by Metis rights. If these individuals have Metis rights

granted to them by the Constitution of Canada, who is Saskatchewan and who are we to challenge that right through negative media press and through unfair labelling?

So it's very, very important today that we get that atmosphere within government, or the environment within government, to look at the Metis people as a proud, successful, determined group of people. There are no . . . not without a doubt, Madam Minister, a very proud and capable people. We've said that many, many times.

There are many people we can talk about here: Jack Janvier, for example — bright young student. We can talk about Colin McColl III, another bright young Metis student. All these people, I'm just thinking in my mind, very, very successful Metis people.

Do they ever get the press, Madam Minister? Do you ever see a very positive story of the Metis in the press? No, Madam Minister, all we get is the negative press. And all we get is the court challenges and all we get is the rallies condemning Metis hunting rights.

(1615)

So, Madam Minister, if we're going to begin to understand what the problem with Metis is, we have to understand what the Metis are about. And that's a challenge that I give to all the members across, especially the member yelling across there, the member from Regina South. You know, he's going to save the plains. Maybe perhaps he should do another cause and start saving grace when it comes to the Metis people.

I want to comment on an article from last June, Madam Minister, and the commentary is by a well-known columnist, Dale Eisler. And the headline says, "Facing a kind of aboriginal limbo." That explains the Metis — facing a kind of aboriginal limbo. And I quote from the correspondence:

Accepting that we identify people as members of . . . (different) groups and believe the group rights of some . . . (are different) from others, it's possible to reach some general conclusions. One is that aboriginal people are, by far, the most disadvantaged group in Saskatchewan.

And then he goes on to add, quote:

But you can take it one step further. Of the aboriginal people, those who face the greatest social and economic problems are the Metis.

And the disadvantaged and sometimes disorganized Metis, what do they get? They get a negative press, they get the rallies against them, and they get an indifferent government responding to some of their needs.

Well, Madam Minister, the Metis people are not going to quit. Through a series of problems, through heartache and headache, financial hardship — some of their own doing — and certainly changes in the style of leadership and the people, they will not quit. They are more determined as each day goes by.

And yes, Madam Minister, there are problems. No question about that. But the thing is, I want to make a point at this stage of the game is when you talk about this provincial government's support for the Metis, at this point in time you have given the Metis Nation \$175,000 in project-specific funding. This money will go to areas like economic development and land and resource management.

What the Metis Nations wanted, Madam Minister, and what they believed they were going to get was core funding. Without adequate, stable funding, the Metis Nation government is hamstrung. But on the other hand, for the member from Regina South's information, the federal government provides \$360,000 in core funding each year — 360,000, Madam Minister.

Why won't the province make the same commitment to the Metis people as the federal government has?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Oh my gosh, I'm a bit shocked actually that I would have to answer this question for you, because you know as well as I do that the MNS (Metis Nation of Saskatchewan) agree 100 per cent with the position that Metis are Indians under section 91(24) of the constitution and as such are a federal responsibility. And if you want to know where that core funding is, I suggest you give Ron Irwin and Anne McLellan a call in Ottawa and ask them where it is.

Dollar for dollar the province provides the same money to the first nations' organizations as to the Metis organizations, even in consideration of the fact that there are three to five times as many first nations people in Saskatchewan to perform exactly the same functions. The only place where the first nations get any additional resources from the province that the Metis Nation doesn't get are in the TLE process, which is a process by which the provincial government is legally bound through the previous agreements with the federal government to fulfil those outstanding treaty entitlement obligations.

So we actually fund dollar for dollar exactly the same to first nations as we do to Metis, even considering the differences in population — dollar for dollar.

The gap in the funding is all federal. The federal government core funds Indians but as a matter of their policy, do not accept that Metis are Indians for the purposes of section 91(24). And I've checked with the Metis Nation several times — is that your position? And time and time again they agree that yes it is.

And as soon as the provincial government touches that, we put it in a position of eroding that argument for that relationship with Ottawa. Now that hasn't stopped us from putting \$327,500 into MNS and its affiliates through a variety of different vehicles. And the money we added this year will certainly move us further along that road.

But I've been in Ottawa on several occasions and had this discussion with Ron Irwin and with Anne McLellan saying, look you guys, what you're doing here isn't fair; you're creating huge differences in the resource levels and the poverty levels between communities, particularly in the North, that are side by side. I think it's highly irresponsible of them. And in fact I'd never thought of this before, but maybe you and I should go

together to talk to them about it. There's no point before the election because obviously their mind is on other things at the moment.

But this is a huge injustice that needs to be rectified. But I would say that even while recognizing that the Metis Nation needs additional resources and I do believe it is at the core of some of their difficulties in getting the work done that they need to get done, the fact is that we have increased funding this year and have other funding that will be released pending the agreement on work plans. And again we sit down at the tripartite table with the federal government and we'll try to get them to come up with more money.

But I refer you back again to section 91(24) and ask you what is your answer to that. Because you know as well as I do what the issue is that we're dealing with here. However we do recognize certainly the good intent and all the accomplishments and the many good people in that community who are trying to get things done. And we certainly have a number of bilateral and tripartite processes by which we meet. We agree to work plans. We proceed on getting those things done.

On the issue of the hunting, a provincial government has to represent all the citizens of the province, and when you're talking about giving differentiated rights, it's important to have legal certainty in that. Because you have to be able to justify likewise to the rest of the province's population that this is a true and legitimate right founded in history, and because of that we're taking it the next step to get that legal certainty on that.

And we certainly have no problem with whatever the outcome of the court ruling is, but the notion is because we represent all the people of the province, we need that legal certainty.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I guess the quote that I'm going to keep using from your response is dollar for dollar, and we've got a few programs here we want to compare the dollar for dollar argument on. But first of all the invitation that you offered to me today to go to Ottawa and talk about some of these things, any day of the week, any month of the year you wish me to accompany you to Ottawa and talk about these things, I certainly will.

And I think the key thing is we're going to talk about the situation facing not only the Metis people of Saskatchewan, but right across this country. And I just wanted to point out your dollar for dollar theory. I just wanted to bring up one other point in this commentary talking about aboriginal limbo, because they are in aboriginal limbo right now in terms of the Metis.

And it says here that, quote:

One other example of how the Metis are treated unequally within the framework of aboriginal rights and government is the handling of the gambling issue. The Romanow government's public policy idea behind expanded casino gambling is as a source of revenue and a tool for . . . economic development.

But what's happened is that the Metis have been treated as

second-class aboriginal people in terms of profit-sharing and control of the government-run . . . casino.

In a May 14 letter to Durocher, Indian and Metis Affairs Minister . . . proposes that the Metis will receive “up to 25 per cent” of gambling revenues that go to what’s called the Associated Entities Fund, AEF. The financial breakdown would then have 50 per cent of the revenues from Casino Regina going to the government, 25 per cent to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and 25 per cent to the AEF, which is made up of various charities and the Metis.

The idea of the Metis being lumped in with (a) charitable organization deeply irks Durocher. “It upsets me they consider us just another charitable organization. I’m very concerned about it because they (should see) . . . the Metis people as a nation, with the right to self-government,” Durocher says.

Well, Madam Minister, what’s your dollar-for-dollar theory on this deal?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — This is an issue that’s a bit complicated by the fact that as you know, the first nations do have an established land base and the Metis don’t. And of course the issue goes back on the one hand to a debate over jurisdiction on a land base. So that right away differentiates part of the discussion because the Metis don’t have a land base on which to exercise jurisdiction. So this is part of the issue.

The second part of the issue is the first nations are the people who approached us with the gaming business as being one of their major areas that they wanted to get into. We never had similar approaches at that time from the Metis Nation. I guess I might liken it to, they literally spent millions on developing their proposals in gaming and there was no similar investment, partly because they didn’t have it but partly because it hadn’t been an area that they had focused on and decided to work on as a nation as the first nations had. They had identified gaming as a sector of economic development that they wanted to get into.

And I can only liken it to when the TD (Toronto Dominion) approaches us with a business development proposal. We don’t then automatically offer part of it to the CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce). This is a business agreement. This is not a racial agreement. It’s a business agreement.

The only part that starts to veer into other issues has to do with the land-based jurisdiction over gaming debate. And again on the Metis Nation end of it, there isn’t a land-based jurisdiction parallel question there. And so it’s a little more complicated than that. But I will mention as a positive note that even despite all that, we recognize that they’re very deserving participants in that agreement, and for ’97-98 the amount of money they’ll receive through that has doubled to about 600,000. So they will be receiving a substantial portion of money without having to have made the investment that first nations made in the building and everything else. They will receive that money without having had to make the investment, all of which you have to deduct from the balance sheet, and without having to manage

any of those operations; and are still also benefiting from the employment because our agreement to employ Indian and Metis people at Casino Regina, for example, includes Metis people as well as Indian. So you can’t just take it as a straight apples-to-apples equation; it’s a bit apples and oranges in the discussion of this.

And to really get to the point you’re talking about, you’d have to consider huge amounts of costs, even that went into a lot of the legal debates that took place on the jurisdictional issues at the beginning of this agreement.

So all I would say is that we’ve made an attempt to be fair and there certainly will be money flowing to a board of directors that will make sure that that money’s used for the benefit of the community. And that will be a very sizeable amount of money that will start flowing in this budget year. And I see that actually improving over time.

So I guess that’s all I can say on that, but it’s a little more complicated than just dollar for dollar on that issue.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And I guess I’m getting some confusing signals from you in terms of on one hand you say we’re dealing with the first nations on a business-to-business arrangement, but we recognize the Metis because of their problems so we allowed them in to the associated entities fund so we could help them out a bit. They haven’t got a land base the same that the treaty Indians have in terms of jurisdiction and land rights and what not. And we know we do have a land settlement case before Saskatchewan as well. But it’s all very confusing in terms of what you mean when you talk about comparing oranges to apples here.

The clear situation . . . The reason why the first nations were allowed into the gaming situation is they had dollars, they had organization, they had the ability to participate in this development — because they were organized. But did the Metis have that same opportunity? The answer is no. And whether you and I sit here all day and argue whether it’s a federal jurisdiction issue or whether it’s a provincial responsibility, that’s not the point. In the meantime, the Metis people are still being left out.

The reason why the first nations are involved with gaming is because they had the money. And they got the money from the federal Liberal government, or from the federal government, period. So the key thing here is that if the Metis had the same opportunity, Madam Minister, would you not agree the same opportunity should have been provided to them by this provincial government?

(1630)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I mean, you’re essentially asking us to resolve a hundred years of federal neglect and underfunding in one agreement. And you can’t achieve that. It’s not realistic. What we did do is recognize that they had a real and legitimate need and that it was a real and legitimate objective to include them as a recipient of revenues under that agreement.

So I don't know what I can say other than the chronic underfunding of the Metis Nation goes back to the federal government's contention that they aren't Indian people for the section in 91(24) of the constitution and the province's agreement with the Metis Nation that the federal government has not fulfilled a responsibility there.

So again that's not one that I can solve for you, other than to say that over time we are certainly working closely with them to improve circumstances as much as we can on every front. But we can't solve that particular problem.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The second part of the question I guess is in essence to determining what a Metis person is. Is it fair to say that the federal government has offered dollars to do up a list of all the Metis people in terms of how many Metis people do we have in Saskatchewan?

And from what I understand is the federal government has offered that commitment to the province to do an enumeration of all the Metis people in Saskatchewan, to know what number are we dealing with here. All we want to know is what number are we dealing with here, Madam Minister?

And if we know what number we're dealing with here, whether it's 50, 60, or 70,000 people, would that not help the province enter into co-management agreements with these people once they're identified? Would that not alleviate some of our problems with hunting abuse? Because many people out there are self-claiming that they're Metis.

Would that not help us with identifying specific people within a disadvantaged group? As you say, these are the people we're dealing with, these 70,000 people, so we're able to determine and to mark which people have been helped in terms of percentages, which direction we're going in terms of some of the educational program dollars, the housing dollars. And this goes on and on.

Would a complete list of all those people that are qualified as Metis for Saskatchewan, would that not help out this government, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you for that question because it's certainly something we've been working on and a matter I think that the whole hunting and fishing issue helped to accelerate I guess the understanding of what it is we really need to get out of a process like that.

Now again I know you're not going to like this part of the answer but I have to say it anyway. The federal government are the ones who identify who's a treaty Indian person and they certainly . . . the provincial government doesn't deliver its funding on a head-count basis. If it did, in some cases the Metis would be worse off because there's less Metis by most people's calculations than first nations. But there's several issues.

One of them is we know with a treaty card, who issues it, who maintains it, what the legal qualifications are to have it. And as you know, none of those questions have quite been answered to everybody's satisfaction yet in this other process. We've got the

issue of definition, the issue of who can verify, and then we need to know what the purpose is of this enumeration. Is it for cultural purposes? Is it for voting purposes within the MNS? Or is it for rights purposes?

Because the kind of enumeration you would want for rights purposes would be much more thorough than an enumeration that you would need for cultural purposes, of organizational membership versus rights administration. And so before we rush headlong into this, we have to decide that what we're going to spend money on is going to serve the purposes, not just for today but into the future on this particular matter.

And then there's the whole issue of upkeep of the records. I mean it's no different than a provincial or federal voters' list. Records are only as good as how well they're kept up. So the funding would not simply be one time. It would be a necessity to provide long-term support to the upkeep of this type of a system. And then there's also the issue of the security of the records because these then become very important records, that you have to make sure that there's the appropriate number of copies stored in safe locations.

And all of that can be worked out and all of that is under discussion. And we certainly have a very open mind on this one and are working in joint cooperation with the Metis Nation and the federal government to decide what's the best way to do this, not for the short term but for the long-term purposes to which such an enumeration may be put.

Mr. Belanger: — Just one quick question. Has the federal government offered any dollars to do this study of who is qualified as a Metis? And if yes or no, is there an amount? And if yes there is amount, has the provincial government agreed to come up with dollars on their own?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — My understanding, it's part of the discussion, but no final amount has been agreed to. They certainly, again for their purposes, would like to do it because they do deliver some of their funding on the basis of head count. Again I say the province doesn't . . . we don't fund people that way; we fund them as citizens of the province.

Mr. Belanger: — Have you got any numbers as to what you estimate the number of Metis people living in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The only tool that exists at the moment is the 1991 census which says 33,000. And until we have a process by which an appropriate enumeration can be done that can be tested against census data for a particular area, we won't know how accurate those figures are.

Mr. Belanger: — And I guess the other thing is, some of the figures that have been bounced around is that perhaps there are as many as 70,000 Metis people. Is that a figure that you find totally out of this world, or really is there some debate to which figure is correct — your figure of 35,000 or some other people's figures of 70,000?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again, those aren't our figures. The only figures we have are the figures generated by the government that is responsible for counting people. That's the

federal government, that's the census data, and they say 33,000. Again I know they added a specific question in the last census. I don't think we have the final information on that yet to see if it varies off the figures from the '91 census.

But again, this has always been a federal responsibility, the counting of people in Canada. And no other province has agreed to participate at all. Saskatchewan is the only province that's even considered participating, because it has clearly always been a federal responsibility to do enumeration.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay, I guess the second part of the question is again, are you going to have a definite date in which you're going to determine yes, we will participate in this process or no, we will not?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We see this question being resolved by the fall. There's no doubt the federal election, as you know having been around in this world through several elections, things tend to grind to a bit of halt in the month and a half or two preceding an election, and then with the appointment of new ministers and what not, that usually takes them awhile to get wound up again after the election. So we'll have a little bit of delay.

And it is a partnership. It's all three parties at the table. Given no substantive changes in federal bureaucrats in the process and others, we see it being within the realm of three months or so to get this thing decided.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you again, and I guess, you know, in terms of the first nations, you know, they certainly are . . . And we have no choice but to recognize their accomplishments, and there's numerous first nations out there doing just a tremendous amount of work. And we looked at some of my own northern Indian bands, example of the Kitaski Development Corporation; some of the work that the Peter Ballantyne Band is doing, the Montreal Lake Band. Just an incredible amount of work.

And that shows the vitality and energy and enthusiasm and the dedication as well as the intelligence of the aboriginal people. And the Metis people want to be part of that picture. That's the whole message we're trying to get here, Madam Minister.

And so when we talk about the treaty and the Metis, we're not trying to differentiate the two groups. We're not trying to split them up. But what we see is a number of policies that kind of confuse me and disturb us.

When the government and the first nations were negotiating gaming, the government gave the first nations, I believe it's \$1.3 million signing bonus. This signing bonus was intended to cover the cost of negotiations. The Metis nations also incurred expenses during these negotiations, and negotiations which are being dragged out by the government and not conducted in good faith. Why won't your department cover the expenses of the Metis Nation for these negotiations when it covered the expenses for the first nations?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We certainly want them to be able to cover their expenses and certainly we're looking at how it's possible to do that. So without announcing a decision before

it's made, I would just say that that decision is . . . could be anticipated in very short order, and I should be able to report to you on that within a very short while, within this month, I would hope.

The other point I'll mention though, is part of the difficulty hasn't just been the relations between the Metis Nation and other citizens of the province; it's been between the Metis Nation and first nations. And I was very encouraged. The Saskatoon REDA (regional economic development authority) had a reception for MLAs in Regina and I was speaking with one Lester Lafond who is a first nations' representative on the REDA board in Saskatoon. And they're actually working with the MNS to have a joint economic development conference, I think towards the end of June, in Saskatoon.

And I see this as a very positive accomplishment, because this has not necessarily been a relationship that's existed in the past. And being that many people are related, in the same families, and certainly working and experiencing some of the same issues, I think it's very positive that they would join forces in having a common economic development strategy and cooperating on creating those opportunities.

So as far as I'm concerned, this has been one of the most optimistic activities that I've heard about in a long time, is this joint effort that's taking place in Saskatoon.

Mr. Belanger: — Again, Madam Minister, the reason why that there's been all that effort and you're positive and happy about it, I'm positive and happy about it . . . But the reason why it happens, because the Metis and the first nations got together.

Now what happens if one group gets X amount of dollars and the other group gets a significant amount? And we don't expect these two groups to get along but again they rose above the challenge and they seen that as long as they were split as aboriginal people, that they wouldn't get anywhere. So they rose above all the problems and the discrepancy and the unfair treatment that the Metis received and they still made an effort to come along and say look, listen, let's work together.

So that is really a commitment — not to how we fund them as a province and how we support the Metis or the first nations as a province — really that's a commitment to them. Again, they've rose above the challenge. And that's the whole thing we're talking about here today. In spite of the problems and the shortcomings, the Metis people have done a tremendous amount of work.

So my question to you: would that not have been handled five or six years ago if this government would have got up and said, yes we believe that you guys are a distinct people; we believe you're a disadvantaged people, as many other Saskatchewan people believe; we know you guys do not want hand-outs and do not want welfare; you guys want to have an equal piece of pie. And that's what they're talking about — equal recognition and treatment.

And do we give them that? Six years later we're talking about how well they're working together in economic development. Well, Madam Minister, they can't work together well if one

partner has got a dollar and the other partner has got a hundred thousand.

So my question to you is, can you make a difference as the Minister of Indian and Metis Affairs to the people of the Metis Nation in terms of giving them that equal playing-field to begin to negotiate, if not first nations but the other business communities as well; so that they could become an independent, proud people?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, all I can say is we have, I think, been pretty consistent in our support. As you will know and which I won't elaborate on, there was some internal troubles that caused everything to go off the rails a couple of years back that were fairly high profile, and that certainly we put a lot of support into getting those matters cleared up so that the organization could get back on track again, and doing the things that it was intended to do.

But certainly on this issue of the projects like the economic development conference in Saskatoon that's upcoming, certainly the first nations and the Metis got together, but we also supported it. The province has put 7,500 directly towards MNS to help in the organizing of this, matched by the federal government's 7,500, and this funding has gone only to the MNS. The FSIN is getting it out of their core funding.

But we have designated funds to this activity, to help them get this conference together, so they are cooperating in partnership and we're supporting it. But we cannot and we will not support the role, or replace the role of the federal government as dictated by section 91(24). And we can't, because as soon as we do, that will for ever take the federal government off the hook to be responsible for that.

(1645)

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And although I sometimes wish I can take that bait and talk about the federal Liberal government, I simply am not a federal Liberal person. I'm a provincial Liberal MLA. And the problems in reference to the accountability and certainly the allegations flying back and forth about the Metis Nation, that doesn't help matters any. We've seen the Tories go through that mess here three or four years. And I guess in terms of the president, and I quote again that Mr. Durocher is, again from the same article, quote:

"I'm a Roman Catholic. If I commit a sin, I go to confession, do my penance and receive forgiveness. What we need is some recognition from this government but instead they treat us as just another interest group," Durocher says.

So, Madam Minister, there's no question that the Metis Nation has gone through some troubling times, and maybe the light at the end of the tunnel still can't be seen for awhile. But certainly, Madam Minister, there are numerous people that make all kinds of mistakes. And when you get a new bunch of people in there, trying to make a difference, would you not say that it's not fair of us to continue to create problems for them? Is it not fair for us to say, look, listen, let's work together; let's work together and let's build from here on in. The past, there

was some mistakes in the past, but let's start being true and equal partners. We will treat you as true and equal partners. Let's work from here on in.

And, Madam Minister, I'll say it publicly, if there's any mismanagement of any place then we should look at that and try and address it. But certainly we cannot simply refuse to deal with these guys because it's either a federal issue or they have mismanagement problems or they're taking us to court on this. It's just all confusing, and at the end nothing gets done.

So, Madam Minister, would you respond to some of the challenges needed, that I addressed.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I'll just say that whenever I've talked to the Metis leadership about this I say, basically this is no different than what the province went through. When we inherited our big debt and all the mismanagement that had taken place with the previous government, we couldn't just forget about it because we had financial obligations. We had to meet them as a province, as a government.

So what they need to do is no different than what we had to do. We had to figure out how to come to grips with that situation — how to restore accountability, how to restore the province's finances. And here we are six years later with all the resources at the command of a provincial government, just now being able to see the daylight at the end of the tunnel.

So it does take time, when damage occurs, to repair things. And it does take a whole bunch of commitment on behalf of new leadership who wasn't part of the problem, to restore the situation and to repair the damage.

And so I would say in that, their experience is no different than ours as a provincial government. They're having to do exactly what we had to do when we were elected in '91. And that's what new leadership has to do. It not only starts afresh but it also has to deal with whatever it inherited from the previous administration.

So I share their pain on that one, let me put it that way. But also I'm very optimistic for the future. I do think there are very good leaders and more young people like the kind you mentioned coming up all the time. It's these folks that you can work with and you can make great strides with. Certainly everything they've put on the table with us, we are considering all of it, moving on some of it, very close to moving on other parts of it. And I'm just very optimistic that the next while will be a time for great improvement.

One of the areas where the Metis Nation and some of the Metis members are involved which is very positive are these partnership agreements with health boards that include jobs, that include economic development opportunities and that include education, and certainly working with the Metis educational institutions to create more targeted training for improved job success for people in that area.

One of the things that you do have to recognize I think, is that this province as a province, and certainly started under NDP governments, has the only self-governing Metis educational

institutions anywhere in Canada. If that's not a commitment, I don't know what its. The only ones anywhere in Canada.

We're hand in hand with tripartite agreement on looking at land issues with the Metis Nation, the federal government, and ourselves. That's a cooperative effort going on. We've got justice initiatives under way. We've got economic development initiatives under way. So I think as soon as all of these activities come forward with work plans, then we're in a very good position to take those things through the budget process. And I just think we'll see very steady improvement.

So I hope people don't get discouraged, but government is a process of accountability and you have to first of all outline what you're going to do and how you're going to do it accountably and then you're able to get the resources to do it. And I'm sure if we weren't doing it that way, you would be challenging us.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. As the Minister of Indian and Metis Affairs in terms of your term in this session, what are some of the immediate things that you wish to get accomplished alongside with the Metis organization? Is there time lines for some of these things? We're talking about steady and consistent funding. We're talking about some of the Metis land base questions. As the minister, what are some of the objectives that you hope to accomplish in your tenure as Minister of Indian and Metis Affairs?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — One of the things that I think is really significant that's happened in this year is rather than a grant here and a grant there and chucking a bit of money at this or a bit of politics at that, what we've done is we've developed a Metis strategy. And this was not easy because again we're developing this strategy in the absence of having issues on land base resolved and in the absence of having issues on section 91(24) resolved. So what we had to do was come up with a practical strategy, that in the absence of those big questions being resolved, what can we do? What can we get done? And all of our objective in this has been how to facilitate more self-sufficiency and more self-determination in the Metis community.

Now the things we've been working on have been particular areas that within the current framework could be considered areas for Metis aboriginal rights. To look at this Grumbo case as you're aware of; to work with the Metis on an organizational Act. Because we recognize that the functions of an organization like the Metis Nation does not fit well within The Non-Profit Corporations Act; so we want to work with them to give them an appropriate tool for being able to govern the Metis Nation as it exists as an organization in Saskatchewan.

We have started to provide an ongoing body of funding to support those processes. We're working on the enumeration project; certainly involved in the discussions with northern local governments on their very ambitious plan to have enhanced participation of Northerners in the service delivery.

We're also looking at some important cultural sites. As was done at Batoche, we're also looking at what other sites in the province have that kind of importance and could be turned over

as, I guess, part of good faith of the recognition of the importance of those lands to the Metis Nation.

And also to support throughout all our departments an expanded role for Metis and service delivery and possibly some new areas that we could consider new institutional development, as we did in the case of Gabriel Dumont and Dumont Technical and those kinds of areas.

So every department in the government is currently now examining those questions in a very systematic way. And it's the first time I think, in the history of government that there's been a strategic approach in this area, not merely an ad hoc approach. So I'm fairly optimistic that we'll see the water line rise in terms of our coming to grips with this very important portion of our community, right across government.

And it's been a bit of an exercise to get the full government engaged in this discussion because often these discussions have been relegated to secretariats or to other people. And so instead of us becoming, in the Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat, the total repository of this discussion, we have been engaged in a process of engaging all of government and its departments and agencies and Crowns in this discussion. And I think that only good will come of this.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I think the key thing here as well in terms of the northern local governments that you speak to and you also allude to in terms of some of the comments that have made, but there is no question that in northern Saskatchewan there's a lot of housing problems, road problems. And it's a very, very challenging place to live. And in spite of some of the challenges that we face as northern people — and a great majority being Metis — they have continued to survive and they'll continue to survive and they're also really trying to build.

So I think some of the partnerships that are developing in northern Saskatchewan deserve merit that your department should look at. When you have northern local governments working alongside the Metis organizations ... most of the northern local governments that I'm aware of consist of Metis people. So in essence, they may be 10, 15 years away from self-government as they see it, but at this point in time they are certainly practising, to a large extent, Metis government at many local communities.

And I can list you off some names of some communities: Buffalo Narrows, La Loche, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Beauval, Pinehouse. All these people are largely administered ... or all these communities are administered by local people. And most of these people are Metis people. So they are capable, Madam Minister.

Now what the Metis people have to do is they have to get organized and they have to start building. And that's the whole challenge here — is we want to be part of the picture, that's the overwhelming message. And we need exciting, innovative government.

We can't have a government that says, well it's Ottawa's fault. We can't have a government that says, well we ... this is a

business arrangement, not a first nations-government deal. We've got to say, what can we do to address some of these problems 5, 10, 15 years down the road — in partnership.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

Now many people in my constituency, they'll say at this point in time, no we don't want Metis Nation to push self-government. It simply will not work because of the structure of the Metis Nation. They have 12 regions in the province, and some regions have a tremendous amount of Metis while other regions don't.

And we can talk about some of the problems that Metis Nation had in the past. And you can talk about some of the problems in northern Saskatchewan not seeing the light of day.

So some of the natural partnerships that are forming out there, the local municipal governments and the Metis locals, what's your government doing to enhance that atmosphere, to encourage a new wave or a new strategy dealing with the Metis Nation and Metis people of this province?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I would agree with the member opposite that there is a lot of innovation coming out of northern Saskatchewan, and that's what always makes it, I guess, such an exciting place to visit, and for many years for myself, an exciting place to live. As you still live there, so you would know better than anyone.

But I think the main difference between the northern communities and southern communities is, in the North, because communities are a little more isolated, they really pull closer together as far as trying to bring together all the different kinds of services that exist or could exist in their communities. And in that way, I think, have a desire to do a bit more than municipalities in the south have a desire to do because they are much more dependent on their own resources there.

Now I know that the Minister of Municipal Government and the Minister of Northern Affairs are more directly involved in these discussions than I am, although I'm certainly very supportive of us doing more as far as helping to create the — what would you say? — the appropriate mechanisms in the North to really build on the momentum that's developing up there for development, for self-determination, for more of a community development model of dealing with communities in the North. And I certainly recognize that many Metis people have been the leaders in those communities for a long time and have been elected as the mayors and the councillors and what not. So there's a very strong base of support there.

What this discussion has reminded me of is that — and I just mentioned it to one of our officials here — is that they should meet with you to gain a better understanding of your view of this relationship in the North; so that as we do move forward with legislation or with other approaches, that we do it with a practical understanding of some of the issues that you're raising. So I just make that commitment to you again today that we'll meet and go over those things with you.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Chair, in order that we can get into Energy and Mines after supper and perhaps some other estimates, I would now move that we report progress.

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